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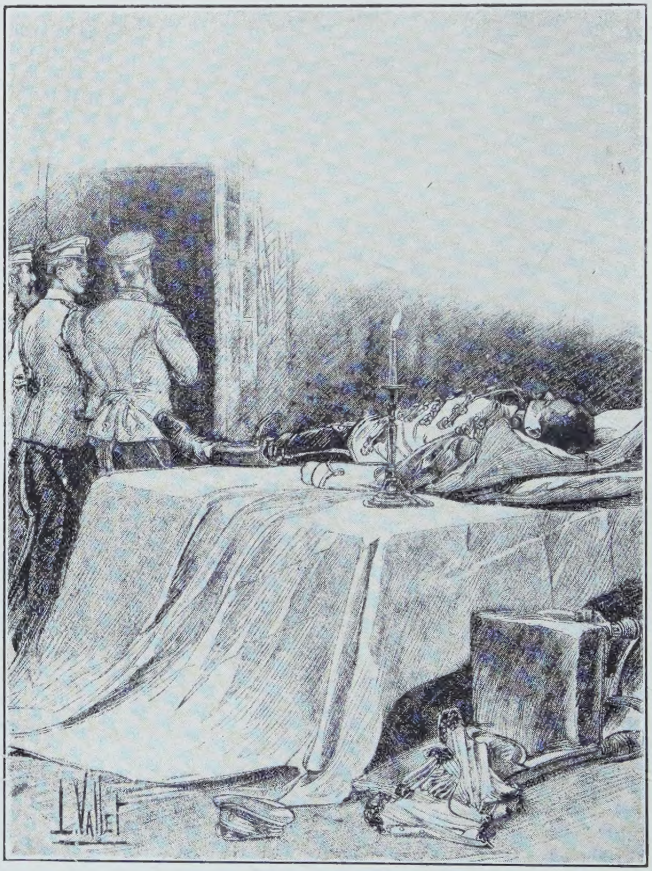

"The table, which had been cleared immediately, now served as a bed on which to lay out the lieutenant."

—*Mademoiselle Fifi, p. 15.*

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

MADEMOISELLE FIFI

AND OTHER STORIES

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Guy de Maupassant

MADEMOISELLE FIFI

MAJOR GRAF VON FARLSBERG, the Prussian commandant, was reading his newspaper as he lay back in a great easy-chair, with his booted feet on the beautiful marble mantelpiece where his spurs had made two holes, which had grown deeper every day during the three months that he had been in the château of Uville.

A cup of coffee was smoking on a small inlaid table, which was stained with liqueur, burned by cigars, notched by the penknife of the victorious officer, who occasionally would stop while sharpening a pencil, to jot down figures, or to make a drawing on it, just as it took his fancy.

When he had read his letters and the German newspapers, which his orderly had brought him, he got up, and after throwing three or four enormous pieces of green wood on the fire, for these gentlemen were gradually cutting down the park in order to keep themselves warm, he went to the window. The rain was descending in torrents, a regular Normandy rain, which looked as if it were being poured out by some furious person, a slanting rain, opaque as a curtain, which formed a kind of wall with diagonal stripes, and which deluged everything, a rain such as one frequently experiences in the neighborhood of Rouen, which is the watering-pot of France.

For a long time the officer looked at the sodden

turf and at the swollen Andelle beyond it, which was overflowing its banks; he was drumming a waltz with his fingers on the window-panes, when a noise made him turn round. It was his second in command, Captain Baron van Kelweinstein.

The major was a giant, with broad shoulders and a long, fan-like beard, which hung down like a curtain to his chest. His whole solemn person suggested the idea of a military peacock, a peacock who was carrying his tail spread out on his breast. He had cold, gentle blue eyes, and a scar from a sword-cut, which he had received in the war with Austria; he was said to be an honorable man, as well as a brave officer.

The captain, a short, red-faced man, was tightly belted in at the waist, his red hair was cropped quite close to his head, and in certain lights he almost looked as if he had been rubbed over with phosphorus. He had lost two front teeth one night, though he could not quite remember how, and this sometimes made him speak unintelligibly, and he had a bald patch on top of his head surrounded by a fringe of curly, bright golden hair, which made him look like a monk.

The commandant shook hands with him and drank his cup of coffee (the sixth that morning), while he listened to his subordinate's report of what had occurred; and then they both went to the window and declared that it was a very unpleasant outlook. The major, who was a quiet man, with a wife at home, could accommodate himself to everything; but the captain, who led a fast life, who was in the habit of frequenting low resorts, and enjoyed

women's society, was angry at having to be shut up for three months in that wretched hole.

There was a knock at the door, and when the commandant said, "Come in," one of the orderlies appeared, and by his mere presence announced that breakfast was ready. In the dining-room they met three other officers of lower rank—a lieutenant, Otto von Grossling, and two sub-lieutenants, Fritz Scheuneberg and Baron von Eyrick, a very short, fair-haired man, who was proud and brutal toward men, harsh toward prisoners and as explosive as gunpowder.

Since he had been in France his comrades had called him nothing but Mademoiselle Fifi. They had given him that nickname on account of his dandified style and small waist, which looked as if he wore corsets; of his pale face, on which his budding mustache scarcely showed, and on account of the habit he had acquired of employing the French expression, *Fi, fi donc,* which he pronounced with a slight whistle when he wished to express his sovereign contempt for persons or things.

The dining-room of the château was a magnificent long room, whose fine old mirrors, that were cracked by pistol bullets, and whose Flemish tapestry, which was cut to ribbons, and hanging in rags in places from sword-cuts, told too well what Mademoiselle Fifi's occupation was during his spare time.

There were three family portraits on the walls: a steel-clad knight, a cardinal and a judge, who were all smoking long porcelain pipes, which had been inserted into holes in the canvas, while a lady in a long, pointed waist proudly exhibited a pair of enormous mustaches, drawn with charcoal. The officers

ate their breakfast almost in silence in that mutilated room, which looked dull in the rain and melancholy in its dilapidated condition, although its old oak floor had become as solid as the stone floor of an inn.

When they had finished eating and were smoking and drinking, they began, as usual, to berate the dull life they were leading. The bottles of brandy and of liqueur passed from hand to hand, and all sat back in their chairs and took repeated sips from their glasses, scarcely removing from their mouths the long, curved stems, which terminated in china bowls, painted in a manner to delight a Hottentot.

As soon as their glasses were empty they filled them again, with a gesture of resigned weariness, but Mademoiselle Fifi emptied his every minute, and a soldier immediately gave him another. They were enveloped in a cloud of strong tobacco smoke, and seemed to be sunk in a state of drowsy, stupid intoxication, that condition of stupid intoxication of men who have nothing to do, when suddenly the baron sat up and said: "Heavens! This cannot go on; we must think of something to do." And on hearing this, Lieutenant Otto and Sub-lieutenant Fritz, who preëminently possessed the serious, heavy German countenance, said: "What, captain?"

He thought for a few moments and then replied: "What? Why, we must get up some entertainment, if the commandant will allow us." "What sort of an entertainment, captain?" the major asked, taking his pipe out of his mouth. "I will arrange all that, commandant," the baron said. "I will send Le Devoir to Rouen, and he will bring back some ladies. I know where they can be found. We will

have supper here, as all the materials are at hand, and, at least, we shall have a jolly evening."

Graf von Farlsberg shrugged his shoulders with a smile: "You must surely be mad, my friend."

But all the other officers had risen and surrounded their chief, saying: "Let the captain have his way, commandant; it is terribly dull here." And the major ended by yielding. "Very well," he replied, and the baron immediately sent for Le Devoir. He was an old non-commissioned officer, who had never been seen to smile, but who carried out all the orders of his superiors to the letter, no matter what they might be. He stood there, with an impassive face, while he received the baron's instructions, and then went out, and five minutes later a large military wagon, covered with tarpaulin, galloped off as fast as four horses could draw it in the pouring rain. The officers all seemed to awaken from their lethargy, their looks brightened, and they began to talk.

Although it was raining as hard as ever, the major declared that it was not so dark, and Lieutenant von Grossling said with conviction that the sky was clearing up, while Mademoiselle Fifi did not seem to be able to keep still. He got up and sat down again, and his bright eyes seemed to be looking for something to destroy. Suddenly, looking at the lady with the mustaches, the young fellow pulled out his revolver and said: "You shall not see it." And without leaving his seat he aimed, and with two successive bullets cut out both the eyes of the portrait.

"Let us make a mine!" he then exclaimed, and the conversation was suddenly interrupted, as if

they had found some fresh and powerful subject of interest. The mine was his invention, his method of destruction, and his favorite amusement.

When he left the château, the lawful owner, Comte Fernand d'Amoys d'Uville, had not had time to carry away or to hide anything except the plate, which had been stowed away in a hole made in one of the walls. As he was very rich and had good taste, the large drawing-room, which opened into the dining-room, looked like a gallery in a museum, before his precipitate flight.

Expensive oil paintings, water colors and drawings hung against the walls, while on the tables, on the hanging shelves and in elegant glass cupboards there were a thousand ornaments: small vases, statuettes, groups of Dresden china and grotesque Chinese figures, old ivory and Venetian glass, which filled the large room with their costly and fantastic array.

Scarcely anything was left now; not that the things had been stolen, for the major would not have allowed that, but Mademoiselle Fifi would every now and then have a mine, and on those occasions all the officers thoroughly enjoyed themselves for five minutes. The little marquis went into the drawing-room to get what he wanted, and he brought back a small, delicate china teapot, which he filled with gunpowder, and carefully introduced a piece of punk through the spout. This he lighted and took his infernal machine into the next room, but he came back immediately and shut the door. The Germans all stood expectant, their faces full of childish, smiling curiosity, and as soon as the explosion had shaken the château, they all rushed in at once.

Mademoiselle Fifi, who got in first, clapped his hands in delight at the sight of a terra-cotta Venus, whose head had been blown off, and each picked up pieces of porcelain and wondered at the strange shape of the fragments, while the major was looking with a paternal eye at the large drawing-room, which had been wrecked after the fashion of a Nero, and was strewn with the fragments of works of art. He went out first and said with a smile: "That was a great success this time."

But there was such a cloud of smoke in the dining-room, mingled with the tobacco smoke, that they could not breathe, so the commandant opened the window, and all the officers, who had returned for a last glass of cognac, went up to it.

The moist air blew into the room, bringing with it a sort of powdery spray, which sprinkled their beards. They looked at the tall trees which were dripping with rain, at the broad valley which was covered with mist, and at the church spire in the distance, which rose up like a gray point in the beating rain.

The bells had not rung since their arrival. That was the only resistance which the invaders had met with in the neighborhood. The parish priest had not refused to take in and to feed the Prussian soldiers; he had several times even drunk a bottle of beer or claret with the hostile commandant, who often employed him as a benevolent intermediary; but it was no use to ask him for a single stroke of the bells; he would sooner have allowed himself to be shot. That was his way of protesting against the invasion, a peaceful and silent protest, the only one, he said, which was suitable to a priest, who was a

man of mildness, and not of blood; and every one, for twenty-five miles round, praised Abbé Chantavoine's firmness and heroism in venturing to proclaim the public mourning by the obstinate silence of his church bells.

The whole village, enthusiastic at his resistance, was ready to back up their pastor and to risk anything, for they looked upon that silent protest as the safeguard of the national honor. It seemed to the peasants that thus they deserved better of their country than Belfort and Strassburg, that they had set an equally valuable example, and that the name of their little village would become immortalized by that; but, with that exception, they refused their Prussian conquerors nothing.

The commandant and his officers laughed among themselves at this inoffensive courage, and as the people in the whole country round showed themselves obliging and compliant toward them, they willingly tolerated their silent patriotism. Little Baron Wilhelm alone would have liked to have forced them to ring the bells. He was very angry at his superior's politic compliance with the priest's scruples, and every day begged the commandant to allow him to sound "ding-dong, ding-dong," just once, only just once, just by way of a joke. And he asked it in the coaxing, tender voice of some loved woman who is bent on obtaining her wish, but the commandant would not yield, and to console himself, Mademoiselle Fifi made a mine in the Château d'Uville.

The five men stood there together for five minutes, breathing in the moist air, and at last Lieutenant Fritz said with a laugh: "The ladies will

certainly not have fine weather for their drive." Then they separated, each to his duty, while the captain had plenty to do in arranging for the dinner.

When they met again toward evening they began to laugh at seeing each other as spick and span and smart as on the day of a grand review. The commandant's hair did not look so gray as it was in the morning, and the captain had shaved, leaving only his mustache, which made him look as if he had a streak of fire under his nose.

In spite of the rain, they left the window open, and one of them went to listen from time to time; and at a quarter past six the baron said he heard a rumbling in the distance. They all rushed down, and presently the wagon drove up at a gallop with its four horses steaming and blowing, and splashed with mud to their girths. Five women dismounted, five handsome girls whom a comrade of the captain, to whom Le Devoir had presented his card, had selected with care.

They had not required much pressing, as they had got to know the Prussians in the three months during which they had had to do with them, and so they resigned themselves to the men as they did to the state of affairs.

They went at once into the dining-room, which looked still more dismal in its dilapidated condition when it was lighted up; while the table covered with choice dishes, the beautiful china and glass, and the plate, which had been found in the hole in the wall where its owner had hidden it, gave it the appearance of a bandits' inn, where they were supping after committing a robbery in the place. The captain was radiant, and put his arm round the

women as if he were familiar with them; and when the three young men wanted to appropriate one each, he opposed them authoritatively, reserving to himself the right to apportion them justly, according to their several ranks, so as not to offed the higher powers. Therefore, to avoid all discussion, jarring, and suspicion of partiality, he placed them all in a row according to height, and addressing the tallest, he said in a voice of command:

"What is your name?" "Pamela," she replied, raising her voice. And then he said: "Number One, called Pamela, is adjudged to the commandant." Then, having kissed Blondina, the second, as a sign of proprietorship, he proffered stout Amanda to Lieutenant Otto; Eva, "the Tomato," to Sub-lieutenant Fritz, and Rachel, the shortest of them all, a very young, dark girl, with eyes as black as ink, a Jewess, whose snub nose proved the rule which allots hooked noses to all her race, to the youngest officer, frail Count Wilhelm d'Eyrick.

They were all pretty and plump, without any distinctive features, and all had a similarity of complexion and figure.

The three young men wished to carry off their prizes immediately, under the pretext that they might wish to freshen their toilets; but the captain wisely opposed this, for he said they were quite fit to sit down to dinner, and his experience in such matters carried the day. There were only many kisses, expectant kisses.

Suddenly Rachel choked, and began to cough until the tears came into her eyes, while smoke came through her nostrils. Under pretence of kissing her, the count had blown a whiff of tobacco into her

mouth. She did not fly into a rage and did not say a word, but she looked at her tormentor with latent hatred in her dark eyes.

They sat down to dinner. The commandant seemed delighted; he made Pamela sit on his right, and Blondina on his left, and said, as he unfolded his table napkin: "That was a delightful idea of yours, captain."

Lieutenants Otto and Fritz, who were as polite as if they had been with fashionable ladies, rather intimidated their guests, but Baron von Kelweinstein beamed, made obscene remarks and seemed on fire with his crown of red hair. He paid the women compliments in French of the Rhine, and sputtered out gallant remarks, only fit for a low pothouse, from between his two broken teeth.

They did not understand him, however, and their intelligence did not seem to be awakened until he uttered foul words and broad expressions, which were mangled by his accent. Then they all began to laugh at once like crazy women and fell against each other, repeating the words, which the baron then began to say all wrong, in order that he might have the pleasure of hearing them say dirty things. They gave him as much of that stuff as he wanted, for they were drunk after the first bottle of wine, and resuming their usual habits and manners, they kissed the officers to right and left of them, pinched their arms, uttered wild cries, drank out of every glass and sang French couplets and bits of German songs which they hal picked up in their daily intercourse with the enemy.

Soon the men themselves became very unrestrained, shouted and broke the plates and dishes,

while the soldiers behind them waited on them stolidly. The commandant was the only one who kept any restraint upon himself.

Mademoiselle Fifi had taken Rachel on his knee, and, getting excited, at one moment he kissed the little black curls on her neck and at another he pinched her furiously and made her scream, for he was seized by a species of ferocity, and tormented by his desire to hurt her. He often held her close to him and pressed a long kiss on the Jewess' rosy mouth until she lost her breath, and at last he bit her until a stream of blood ran down her chin and on to her bodice.

For the second time she looked him full in the face, and as she bathed the wound, she said: "You will have to pay for that!" But he merely laughed a hard laugh and said: "I will pay."

At dessert champagne was served, and the commandant rose, and in the same voice in which he would have drunk to the health of the Empress Augusta, he drank: "To our ladies!" And a series of toasts began, toasts worthy of the lowest soldiers and of drunkards, mingled with obscene jokes, which were made still more brutal by their ignorance of the language. They got up, one after the other, trying to say something witty, forcing themselves to be funny, and the women, who were so drunk that they almost fell off their chairs, with vacant looks and clammy tongues applauded madly each time.

The captain, who no doubt wished to impart an appearance of gallantry to the orgy, raised his glass again and said: "To our victories over hearts!" And, thereupon, Lieutenant Otto, who was a species of bear from the Black Forest, jumped up, inflamed

and saturated with drink, and suddenly seized by an access of alcoholic patriotism, he cried: "To our victories over France!"

Drunk as they were, the women were silent, but Rachel turned round, trembling, and said: "See here, I know some Frenchmen in whose presence you would not dare say that." But the little count, still holding her on his knee, began to laugh, for the wine had made him very merry, and said: "Ha! ha! ha! I have never met any of them myself. As soon as we show ourselves, they run away!" The girl, who was in a terrible rage, shouted into his face: "You are lying, you dirty scoundrel!"

For a moment he looked at her steadily with his bright eyes upon her, as he had looked at the portrait before he destroyed it with bullets from his revolver, and then he began to laugh: "Ah! yes, talk about them, my dear! Should we be here now if they were brave?" And, getting excited, he exclaimed: "We are the masters! France belongs to us!" She made one spring from his knee and threw herself into her chair, while he arose, held out his glass over the table and repeated: "France and the French, the woods, the fields and the houses of France belong to us!"

The others, who were quite drunk, and who were suddenly seized by military enthusiasm, the enthusiasm of brutes, seized their glasses, and shouting, "Long live Prussia!" they emptied them at a draught.

The girls did not protest, for they were reduced to silence and were afraid. Even Rachel did not say a word, as she had no reply to make. Then the little marquis put his champagne glass, which had

just been refilled, on the head of the Jewess and exclaimed: "All the women in France belong to us also!"

At that she got up so quickly that the glass upset, spilling the amber-colored wine on her black hair as if to baptize her, and broke into a hundred fragments, as it fell to the floor. Her lips trembling, she defied the looks of the officer, who was still laughing, and stammered out in a voice choked with rage: "That—that—that—is not true—for you shall not have the women of France!"

He sat down again so as to laugh at his ease; and, trying to speak with the Parisian accent, he said: "She is good, very good! Then why did you come here, my dear?" She was thunderstruck and made no reply for a moment, for in her agitation she did not understand him at first, but as soon as she grasped his meaning she said to him indignantly and vehemently: "I! I! I am not a woman, I am only a strumpet, and that is all that Prussians want."

Almost before she had finished he slapped her full in the face; but as he was raising his hand again, as if to strike her, she seized a small dessert knife with a silver blade from the table and, almost mad with rage, stabbed him right in the hollow of his neck. Something that he was going to say was cut short in his throat, and he sat there with his mouth half open and a terrible look in his eyes.

All the officers shouted in horror and leaped up tumultuously; but, throwing her chair between the legs of Lieutenant Otto, who fell down at full length, she ran to the window, opened it before they could seize her and jumped out into the night and the pouring rain.

In two minutes Mademoiselle Fifi was dead, and Fritz and Otto drew their swords and wanted to kill the women, who threw themselves at their feet and clung to their knees. With some difficulty the major stopped the slaughter and had the four terrified girls locked up in a room under the care of two soldiers, and then he organized the pursuit of the fugitive as carefully as if he were about to engage in a skirmish, feeling quite sure that she would be caught.

The table, which had been cleared immediately, now served as a bed on which to lay out the lieutenant, and the four officers stood at the windows, rigid and sobered, with the stern faces of soldiers on duty, and tried to pierce through the darkness of the night amid the steady torrent of rain. Suddenly a shot was heard, and then another, a long way off; and for four hours they heard from time to time near or distant reports and rallying cries, strange words of challenge, uttered in guttural voices.

In the morning they all returned. Two soldiers had been killed and three others wounded by their comrades in the ardor of that chase and in the confusion of that nocturnal pursuit, but they had not caught Rachel.

Then the inhabitants of the district were terrorized, the houses were turned topsy-turvy, the country was scoured and beaten up, over and over again, but the Jewess did not seem to have left a single trace of her passage behind her.

When the general was told of it he gave orders to hush up the affair, so as not to set a bad example to the army, but he severely censured the comman-

dant, who in turn punished his inferiors. The general had said: "One does not go to war in order to amuse one's self and to caress prostitutes." Graf von Farlsberg, in his exasperation, made up his mind to have his revenge on the district, but as he required a pretext for showing severity, he sent for the priest and ordered him to have the bell tolled at the funeral of Baron von Eyrick.

Contrary to all expectation, the priest showed himself humble and most respectful, and when Mademoiselle Fifi's body left the Château d'Uville on its way to the cemetery, carried by soldiers, preceded, surrounded and followed by soldiers who marched with loaded rifles, for the first time the bell sounded its funeral knell in a lively manner, as if a friendly hand were caressing it. At night it rang again, and the next day, and every day; it rang as much as any one could desire. Sometimes even it would start at night and sound gently through the darkness, seized with a strange joy, awakened one could not tell why. All the peasants in the neighborhood declared that it was bewitched, and nobody except the priest and the sacristan would now go near the church tower. And they went because a poor girl was living there in grief and solitude and provided for secretly by those two men.

She remained there until the German troops departed, and then one evening the priest borrowed the baker's cart and himself drove his prisoner to Rouen. When they got there he embraced her, and she quickly went back on foot to the establishment from which she had come, where the proprietress, who thought that she was dead, was very glad to see her.

A short time afterward a patriot who had no prejudices, and who liked her because of her bold deed, and who afterward loved her for herself, married her and made her a lady quite as good as many others.

FATHER AND SON

HAUTOT SENIOR AND JUNIOR

THE dogs fastened to the apple trees in the grounds in front of the house were giving tongue at the sight of the game bags carried by the gamekeepers and small boys. It was half farm and half manor house, one of those quasi seignorial country residences, now occupied by large farmers. In the spacious dining-room-kitchen, Hautot Senior and Hautot Junior, M. Bermont, the tax collector, and M. Mondaru, the notary, were eating a mouthful and drinking a glass before going out shooting, for it was the first day of the season.

Hautot Senior, proud of all his possessions, talked boastfully of the game which his guests were going to find on his lands. He was a big Norman, one of those powerful, ruddy men, with large bones, who lift wagon loads of apples on their shoulders. Half peasant, half gentleman, rich, respected, influential, autocratic, he obliged his son César to go through the third form at college so that he might be an educated man, and there he had brought his studies to an end, for fear of his becoming a fine gentleman and paying no attention to the land.

César Hautot, almost as tall as his father, but thinner, was a good son, docile, content with every-

thing, full of admiration, respect, and deference for the wishes and opinions of Hautot Senior.

M. Bermont, the tax collector, a stout little man, who showed on his red cheeks a thin network of violet veins resembling the tributaries and the winding courses of rivers on maps, asked:

"And hares—are there any hares?"

Hautot Senior answered:

"As many as you wish, especially in the Puysatier land."

"How shall we set out?" asked the notary, an epicure of a notary, pale and corpulent, with a brand-new hunting costume, belted in, that he had bought at Rouen.

"Well, that way, through the bottoms. We will drive the partridges into the plain, and we can get them there."

And Hautot Senior rose up. They all followed his example, took their guns out of the corners, examined the locks, stamped their feet in order to adjust their boots, which were rather hard, not having become flexible from wear. Then they went out; and the dogs, standing on their hind legs at the ends of their leashes, gave tongue while beating the air with their paws.

They set out toward the bottoms referred to. These consisted of a little valley, or, rather, a long, undulating stretch of poor land, which had on that account remained uncultivated, furrowed with ditches and covered with ferns, an excellent preserve for game.

The sportsmen took up their positions at some distance form each other, Hautot Senior at the right, Hautot Junior at the left, and the two guests

in the middle. The gamekeeper, and the men carrying the game bags, followed. It was the solemn moment when the first shot is awaited, when the heart beats a little, while the nervous finger keeps feeling the trigger.

Suddenly a shot went off. Hautot Senior had fired. They all stopped, and saw a partridge separate from a covey which had risen, and fall down into a deep ditch under a thick growth of brush. The sportsman, becoming excited, rushed forward with rapid strides, thrusting aside the briars which stood in his path, and disappeared in his turn into the thicket, in quest of his game.

Almost at the same instant, a second shot was heard.

"Ha! ha! the rascal!" exclaimed M. Bermont, "he must have started a hare down there."

They all waited, with their eyes riveted on the mass of brush which their gaze failed to penetrate.

The notary, making a speaking trumpet of his hands, shouted:

"Have you got them?"

Hautot Senior made no response.

Then César, turning toward the gamekeeper, said:

"Just go and assist him, Joseph. We must keep walking in line. We'll wait."

And Joseph, an old stump of a man, lean and knotty, all of whose joints formed protuberances, set off at an easy pace down into the ditch, searching every opening through which a passage could be effected with the cautiousness of a fox. Then, suddenly, he cried:

"Oh! come! come! an accident has occurred."

They all hurried forward, plunging through the briars.

The elder Hautot had fallen on his side, in a faint, with both hands pressed to his abdomen, from which blood trickled through his shooting jacket, torn by a bullet. Letting go of his gun, in order to pick up the dead partridge, he had let the firearm fall, and the second discharge, going off with the shock, had torn open his entrails. They drew him out of the trench, removed his clothes, and saw a frightful wound, through which the intestines protruded. Then, after having ligatured him the best way they could, they brought him back to his own house, and awaited the doctor, who had been sent for, as well as the priest.

When the doctor arrived he gravely shook his head, and, turning toward young Hautot, who was sobbing on a chair, he said:

"My poor boy, this does not look favorable."

But, when the wound was dressed, the wounded man moved his fingers, opened his mouth then his eyes, cast around him troubled, haggard glances, then appeared to be trying to recall, to understand, and he murmured:

"Ah! good God! this has finished me!"

The doctor held his hand.

"Why, no; why, no; some days of rest merely—it will be nothing."

Hautot returned:

"It has finished me! My abdomen is gashed! I know it well."

Then, all of a sudden:

"I want to talk to my son, if I have time."

Hautot Junior, in spite of himself, shed tears, and kept repeating like a little boy:

"Papa, papa, poor papa!"

But the father, in a firm tone, said:

"Come! stop crying—this is no time for it. I have something to say to you. Sit down there, quite close to me. It will not take long, and I shall be more calm. As for the rest of you, kindly leave us alone for a minute."

They all went out, leaving the father and son together.

As soon as they were alone:

"Listen, son!" he said, "you are twenty-four; one can talk to you. And then there is not such mystery about these matters as we attach to them. You know, do you not, that your mother has been dead seven years, and that I am not more than forty-five years myself, seeing that I was married at nineteen. Is not that true?"

The son faltered:

"Yes, it is true."

"So then your mother is dead seven years, and I have remained a widower. Well! a man like me cannot remain without a wife at thirty-seven, isn't that true?"

The son replied:

"Yes, it is true."

The father, out of breath, very pale, and his face contracted with suffering, went on:

"God! how I suffer! Well, you understand. Man is not made to live alone, but I did not want to take a successor to your mother, since I promised her not to do so. Therefore—you understand?"

"Yes, father."

"Well, I kept a young girl at Rouen, number eighteen, Rue de l'Éperlan, on the third floor, the second door—I am telling you all this, don't forget—a young girl, who has been very nice to me, loving, devoted, a true woman, eh? You understand, my lad?"

"Yes, father."

"So then, if I am carried off, I owe something to her, something substantial, that will place her beyond the reach of want. You understand?"

"Yes, father."

"I tell you that she is a good girl, and, but for you, and the remembrance of your mother, and also because we three lived together in this house, I would have brought her here, and then married her. Listen—listen, my boy—I might have made a will—I haven't done so. I did not wish to do so—for it is not necessary to write down things—things of this sort—it is too damaging to the legitimate children—and then it makes confusion—it ruins every one! Look you, lawyers, there's no need of them—never consult one. If I am rich, it is because I never employed one in all my life. You understand, my son?"

"Yes, father."

"Listen again—listen attentively! So then, I have made no will—I did not desire to do so—and then I knew you; you have a good heart, you are not covetous, not stingy, and I said to myself that when my end approached I would tell you all about it, and that I would beg of you not to forget the girl. And then, listen again! When I am gone, go and see her at once—and make such arrangements that she may not blame my memory. You have

plenty of means. You can spare it—I leave you enough. Listen! You won't find her at home every day in the week. She works at Madame Moreau's in the Rue Beauvoisine. Go there on a Thursday. That is the day she expects me. It has been my day for the past six years. Poor little girl! she will weep! I say all this to you, because I know you so well, my son. One does not tell these things in public, either to the notary or to the priest. They happen—every one knows that—but they are not talked about, save in case of necessity. Then there must be no outsider in the secret, nobody except the family, because the family consists of one person alone. You understand?"

"Yes, father."

"Do you promise?"

"Yes, father."

"Do you swear it?"

"Yes, father."

"I beg of you, I implore of you, son, do not forget. I insist on this."

"No, father."

"You will go yourself. I want you to make sure of everything."

"Yes, father."

"And then, you will see—you will see what she will explain to you. As for me, I can say no more to you. You have sworn to do it."

"Yes, father."

"That's good, my son. Embrace me. Farewell. I am going to die, I'm sure. Tell them they may come in."

Young Hautot embraced his father, groaning as he did so; then, always docile, he opened the door,

and the priest appeared in a white surplice, carrying the holy oils.

But the dying man had closed his eyes and refused to open them again; he refused to answer, and even to show by a sign that he understood.

He had talked enough, this man; he could speak no longer. Besides, he now felt his heart at ease and wanted to die in peace. What need had he to make a confession to the deputy of God, since he had just confessed to his son, who constituted his family?

He received the last rites, was purified, and received absolution, surrounded by his friends and his servants on their bended knees, without any movement of his face indicating that he still lived.

He expired about midnight, after four hours of spasms, which showed that he must have suffered dreadfully.

PART II

He was buried on Tuesday, the shooting season having opened on Sunday. On returning home after the funeral César Hautot spent the rest of the day weeping. He scarcely slept that night, and felt so sad on awaking that he asked himself how he could go on living.

However, he kept thinking that, in order to obey his father's dying wish, he must go to Rouen the following day, and see this girl Caroline Donet, who lived at eighteen Rue d'Éperlan, the third story, second door. He had muttered to himself this name and address a countless number of times, just as a child repeats a prayer, so that he might not forget

them, and he ended by repeating them continually, without thinking, so impressed were they on his mind.

Accordingly, on the following day, about eight o'clock, he ordered Graindorge to be harnessed to the tilbury, and set forth, at the long, swinging pace of the heavy Norman horse, along the high road from Ainville to Rouen. He wore his black frock coat, his tall silk hat, and his trousers strapped under his shoes, and, being in mourning, did not put on his blue dust coat.

He entered Rouen just as it was striking ten o'clock, put up, as he had always done, at the Hotel des Bons-Enfants, in the Rue des Trois-Mares, and submitted to the embraces of the landlord and his wife and their five children, for they had heard the melancholy news; after that, he had to tell them all the particulars of the accident, which caused him to shed tears; to repel all the proffered attentions which they sought to thrust upon him merely because he was wealthy; and to decline even the luncheon they wanted him to partake of, thus wounding their sensibilities.

Then, having wiped the dust off his hat, brushed his coat, and removed the mud stains from his boots, he set forth in search of the Rue de l'Éperlan, without venturing to make inquiries from any one, for fear of being recognized and of arousing suspicion.

At length, unable to find the place, he saw a priest passing by, and, trusting to the professional discretion of the clergy, he questioned the ecclesiastic.

He had only a hundred steps farther to go; it was the second street to the right.

Then he hesitated. Up to that moment he had obeyed, like a mere animal, the expressed wish of the deceased. Now he felt quite agitated, confused, humiliated, at the idea of finding himself—the son—in the presence of this woman who had been his father's sweetheart. All the morality we possess, which lies buried at the bottom of our emotions through centuries of hereditary instruction, all that he had been taught since he had learned his catechism about creatures of evil life, the instinctive contempt which every man entertains toward them, even though he may marry one of them, all the narrow honesty of the peasant in his character, was stirred up within him, and held him back, making him grow red with shame.

But he said to himself:

"I promised the father. I must not break my promise."

So he pushed open the partly opened door of number eighteen, saw a gloomy-looking staircase, ascended three flights, perceived a door, then a second door, saw a bell rope, and pulled it. The ringing, which resounded in the apartment, sent a shiver through his frame. The door was opened, and he found himself face to face with a well-dressed young lady, a brunette with rosy cheeks, who gazed at him with eyes of astonishment.

He did not know what to say to her, and she, who suspected nothing, and who was waiting for the father, did not invite him to come in. They stood looking thus at one another for nearly half

a minute, at the end of which she said in a questioning tone:

"Do you want anything, monsieur?"

He falteringly replied:

"I am M. Hautot's son."

She gave a start, turned pale, and stammered out as if she had known him for a long time:

"Monsieur César?"

"Yes."

"And what then?"

"I have come with a message to you from my father."

She exclaimed:

"Oh, my God!" and then drew back so that he might enter. He shut the door and followed her into the apartment. Then he perceived a little boy of four or five years playing with a cat, seated on the floor in front of a stove, from which rose an odor of food being kept hot.

"Take a seat," she said.

He sat down.

"Well?" she questioned.

He no longer ventured to speak, keeping his eyes fixed on the table which stood in the centre of the room, with three covers laid on it, one of which was for a child, and a bottle of claret that had been opened, and one of white wine that had not been uncorked. He glanced at the chair with its back turned to the fire. That was his father's chair! They were expecting him. That was his bread which he saw at his place, for the crust had been removed on account of Hautot's bad teeth. Then, raising his eyes, he noticed on the wall his father's portrait, the large photograph taken at Paris the

year of the exhibition, the same as that which hung above the bed in the sleeping apartment at Ainville.

The young woman again asked:

"Well, Monsieur César?"

He kept staring at her. Her face was livid with anxiety, and she waited, her hands trembling with fear.

Then he took courage.

"Well, mam'zelle, papa died on Sunday last just after he had opened the shooting season."

She was so overwhelmed that she did not move. After a silence of a few seconds, she faltered in an almost inaudible tone:

"Oh, it is not possible!"

Then, on a sudden, tears came into her eyes, and, covering her face with her hands, she burst out sobbing.

At that point the little boy turned round, and, seeing his mother weeping, began to roar. Then, realizing that this sudden trouble was brought about by the stranger, he rushed at César, caught hold of his trousers with one hand and with the other hit him with all his strength on the thigh. And César remained bewildered, deeply affected; with this woman mourning for his father on the one hand, and the little boy defending his mother on the other. He felt their emotion taking possession of him, and his eyes were beginning to fill with tears; so, to recover his self-command, he began to talk:

"Yes," he said, "the accident occurred on Sunday, at eight o'clock——"

And he told all the facts as if she were listening to him, without forgetting a single detail, mention-

ing the most trivial matters with the minuteness of a countryman. And the child still kept attacking him, kicking his ankles.

When he came to what his father had said about her, she took her hands from her face and said:

"Pardon me! I was not following you; I would like to know—— Would you mind beginning over again?"

He repeated everything in the same words, with pauses and reflections of his own from time to time. She listened eagerly now, perceiving, with a woman's keen sensibility, all the sudden changes of fortune which his narrative implied, and trembling with horror, every now and then exclaiming:

"Oh, my God!"

The little fellow, believing that she had calmed down, ceased beating César, in order to take his mother's hand, and he listened, too, as if he understood.

When the narrative was finished, young Hautot continued:

"Now, we will settle matters together, in accordance with his wishes. I am well off, he has left me plenty of means. I don't want you to have anything to complain about——"

But she quickly interrupted him.

"Oh! Monsieur César, Monsieur César, not to-day. I am cut to the heart—another time—another day. No, not to-day. If I accept, listen—it is not for myself—no, no, no, I swear to you, it is for the child. Besides, this sum will be placed to his account."

Thereupon, César, horrified, guessed the truth, and stammered:

"So then—it is his—the child?"

"Why, yes," she said.

And Hautot Junior gazed at his brother with a confused emotion, intense and painful.

After a long silence, for she had begun to weep afresh, César, quite embarrassed, went on:

"Well, then, Mam'zelle Donet, I am going. When would you wish to talk this over with me?"

She exclaimed:

"Oh! no, don't go! don't go! Don't leave me all alone with Émile. I would die of grief. I have no longer any one, any one but my child. Oh! what wretchedness, what wretchedness, Monsieur César! Come, sit down again. Tell me something more. Tell me what he did at home all the week."

And César resumed his seat, accustomed to obey.

She drew over another chair for herself in front of the stove, where the dishes had all this time been heating, took Émile upon her knees, and asked César a thousand questions about his father—questions of an intimate nature, which made him feel, without reasoning on the subject, that she had loved Hautot with all the strength of her weak woman's heart.

And, by the natural sequence of his ideas—which were rather limited in number—he recurred once more to the accident, and set about telling the story over again with all the same details.

When he said:

"He had a hole in his stomach that you could put your two fists into," she gave a sort of shriek, and her eyes again filled with tears.

Then, seized by the contagion of her grief, César began to weep, too, and as tears always soften the

fibres of the heart, he bent over Émile, whose forehead was close to his own mouth, and kissed him.

The mother, recovering her breath, murmured:

"Poor child, he is an orphan now!"

"And so am I," said César.

And they were silent.

But suddenly the practical instinct of the housewife, accustomed to think of everything, revived in the young woman's breast.

"You have perhaps had nothing to eat all the morning, Monsieur César."

"No, mam'zelle."

"Oh! you must be hungry. You will eat a morsel."

"Thank you," he said, "I am not hungry; I have had too much sorrow."

She replied:

"In spite of sorrow, we must live. You will not refuse to let me get something for you! And then you will remain a little longer. When you are gone, I don't know what will become of me."

He yielded after some further resistance, and, sitting down with his back to the fire, facing her, he ate a plateful of tripe, which had been drying up in the gravy, and drank a glass of red wine. But he would not allow her to uncork the bottle of white wine. He several times wiped the mouth of the little boy, who had smeared all his chin with gravy.

As he rose to take his leave, he asked:

"When would you like me to come back to talk about this matter, Mam'zelle Donet?"

"If it is all the same to you, say next Thursday, Monsieur César. In that way I shall not waste my time, as I always have my Thursdays free."

"That will suit me—next Thursday."

"You will come to luncheon, won't you?"

"Oh! As to that I can't promise."

"The reason I suggested it is, that people can chat better when they are eating. One has more time, too."

"Well, be it so. About twelve o'clock, then."

And he took his departure, after he had again kissed little Émile, and pressed Mademoiselle Donet's hand.

PART III

The week appeared long to César Hautot. He had never before lived alone, and the isolation seemed to him unendurable. Till now, he had lived at his father's side, just like his shadow, followed him into the fields, superintended the execution of his orders, and if they were separated for a short time they again met at dinner. They spent the evenings smoking their pipes together, sitting opposite each other, chatting about horses, cows, or sheep; and the grip of their hands when they rose in the morning was a manifestation of deep family affection.

Now César was alone. He went mechanically about his autumn duties on the farm, expecting any moment to see his father's tall, energetic outline rising up at the end of a level field. To kill time, he visited his neighbors, told about the accident to all who had not heard of it, and sometimes repeated it to the others. Then, having exhausted his occupations and his reflections, he would sit down at the

side of the road, asking himself whether this kind of life was going to last forever.

He frequently thought of Mademoiselle Donet. He liked her. He considered her thoroughly respectable, a gentle, good young woman, as his father had said. Yes, undoubtedly she was a good girl. He resolved to act handsomely toward her, and to give her two thousand francs a year, settling the capital on the child. He even experienced a certain pleasure in thinking that he was going to see her on the following Thursday and arrange this matter with her. And then the thought of this brother, this little chap of five, who was his father's son, worried him, annoyed him a little, and, at the same time, pleased him. He had, as it were, a family in this youngster, sprung from a clandestine alliance, who would never bear the name of Hautot—a family which he might take or leave, just as he pleased, but which reminded him of his father.

And so, when he saw himself on the road to Rouen on Thursday morning, borne along by Graindorge with his measured trot, he felt his heart lighter, more at peace than it had been since his bereavement.

On entering Mademoiselle Donet's apartment, he saw the table laid as on the previous Thursday, with the sole difference that the crust had not been removed from the bread. He pressed the young woman's hand, kissed Émile on both cheeks, and sat down, more or less as if he were in his own house, although his heart was full. Mademoiselle Donet seemed to him a little thinner and paler. She must have grieved sorely. She now wore an air of constraint in his presence, as if she understood what

she had not felt the week before under the first blow of her misfortune, and she exhibited an excessive deference toward him, a mournful humility, and made touching efforts to please him, as if to repay by her attentions the kindness he had manifested toward her. They were a long time at luncheon, talking over the business which had brought him there. She did not want so much money. It was too much. She earned enough to live on herself, but she only wished that Émile might find a few sous awaiting him when he grew up. César was firm, however, and even added a gift of a thousand francs for herself, for the expenses of mourning.

When he had taken his coffee, she asked:

"Do you smoke?"

"Yes—I have my pipe."

He felt in his pocket. Good heavens! He had forgotten it! He was becoming quite distressed about it when she offered him a pipe of his father's that had been put away in a closet. He took it up in his hand, recognized it, smelled it, spoke of its quality in a tone of emotion, filled it with tobacco, and lighted it. Then, he set Émile astride his knee, and gave him a ride, while she removed the tablecloth, and piled the soiled dishes under the sideboard, intending to wash them as soon as he was gone.

About three o'clock he rose regretfully, quite annoyed at the thought of having to go.

"Well! Mademoiselle Donet," he said, "I wish you good evening, and am delighted to have found you like this."

She remained standing before him, blushing, much

affected, and gazed at him while she thought of the father.

"Shall we not see one another again?" she said.

He replied simply:

"Why, yes, mademoiselle, if it gives you pleasure."

"Certainly, Monsieur César. Will next Thursday suit you?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Donet."

"You will come to luncheon, of course?"

"Well—if you are so kind as to invite me, I can't refuse."

"It is understood, then, Monsieur César—next Thursday, at twelve, the same as to-day."

"Thursday at twelve, Mademoiselle Donet!"

THE MASK

THERE was a masquerade ball at the Elysée-Montmartre that evening. It was the *Mi-Carême,* and the crowds were pouring into the brightly lighted passage which leads to the dance hall, like water flowing through the open lock of a canal. The loud call of the orchestra, bursting like a storm of sound, shook the rafters, swelled through the whole neighborhood and awoke, in the streets and in the depths of the houses, an irresistible desire to jump, to get warm, to have fun, which slumbers within each human animal.

The patrons came from every quarter of Paris; there were people of all classes who love noisy pleasures, a little low and tinged with debauch. There were clerks and girls—girls of every description, some wearing common cotton, some the finest batiste; rich girls, old and covered with diamonds, and poor girls of sixteen, full of the desire to revel, to belong to men, to spend money. Elegant black evening suits, in search of fresh or faded but appetizing novelty, wandering through the excited crowds, looking, searching, while the masqueraders seemed moved above all by the desire for amusement. Already the far-famed quadrilles had attracted around them a curious crowd. The moving hedge which encircled the four dancers swayed in and out like a snake, sometimes nearer and sometimes farther

away, according to the motions of the performers. The two women, whose lower limbs seemed to be attached to their bodies by rubber springs, were making wonderful and surprising motions with their legs. Their partners hopped and skipped about, waving their arms about. One could imagine their panting breath beneath their masks.

One of them, who had taken his place in the most famous quadrille, as substitute for an absent celebrity, the handsome *"Songe-au-Gosse,"* was trying to keep up with the tireless *"Arête-de-Veau"* and was making strange fancy steps which aroused the joy and sarcasm of the audience.

He was thin, dressed like a dandy, with a pretty varnished mask on his face. It had a curly blond mustache and a wavy wig. He looked like a wax figure from the Musée Grévin, like a strange and fantastic caricature of the charming young man of fashion plates, and he danced with visible effort, clumsily, with a comical impetuosity. He appeared rusty beside the others when he tried to imitate their gambols: he seemed overcome by rheumatism, as heavy as a great Dane playing with greyhounds. Mocking bravos encouraged him. And he, carried away with enthusiasm, jigged about with such frenzy that suddenly, carried away by a wild spurt, he pitched head foremost into the living wall formed by the audience, which opened up before him to allow him to pass, then closed around the inanimate body of the dancer, stretched out on his face.

Some men picked him up and carried him away, calling for a doctor. A gentleman stepped forward, young and elegant, in well-fitting evening clothes, with large pearl studs. "I am a professor of the

Faculty of Medicine," he said in a modest voice. He was allowed to pass, and he entered a small room full of little cardboard boxes, where the still lifeless dancer had been stretched out on some chairs. The doctor at first wished to take off the mask, and he noticed that it was attached in a complicated manner, with a perfect network of small metal wires which cleverly bound it to his wig and covered the whole head. Even the neck was imprisoned in a false skin which continued the chin and was painted the color of flesh, being attached to the collar of the shirt.

All this had to be cut with strong scissors. When the physician had slit open this surprising arrangement, from the shoulder to the temple, he opened this armor and found the face of an old man, worn out, thin and wrinkled. The surprise among those who had brought in this seemingly young dancer was so great that no one laughed, no one said a word.

All were watching this sad face as he lay on the straw chairs, his eyes closed, his face covered with white hair, some long, falling from the forehead over the face, others short, growing around the face and the chin, and, beside this poor head, that pretty little, neat, varnished, smiling mask.

The man regained consciousness after being inanimate for a long time, but he still seemed to be so weak and sick that the physician feared some dangerous complication. He asked: "Where do you live?"

The old dancer seemed to be making an effort to remember, and then he mentioned the name of the street, which no one knew. He was asked for more definite information about the neighborhood. He answered with a great slowness, indecision and dif-

ficulty, which revealed his upset state of mind. The physician continued:

"I will take you home myself."

Curiosity had overcome him to find out who this strange dancer, this phenomenal jumper might be. Soon the two rolled away in a cab to the other side of Montmartre.

They stopped before a high building of poor appearance. They went up a winding staircase. The doctor held to the banister, which was so grimy that the hand stuck to it, and he supported the dizzy old man, whose forces were beginning to return. They stopped at the fourth floor.

The door at which they had knocked was opened by an old woman, neat looking, with a white nightcap enclosing a thin face with sharp features, one of those good, rough faces of a hard-working and faithful woman. She cried out:

"For goodness sake! What's the matter?"

He told her the whole affair in a few words. She became reassured and even calmed the physician himself by telling him that the same thing had happened many times. She said: "He must be put to bed, monsieur, that is all. Let him sleep and tomorrow he will be all right."

The doctor continued: "But he can hardly speak."

"Oh! that's just a little drink, nothing more; he has eaten no dinner, in order to be nimble, and then he took a few absinthes in order to work himself up to the proper pitch. You see, drink gives strength to his legs, but it stops his thoughts and words. He is too old to dance as he does. Really, his lack of common sense is enough to drive one mad!"

The doctor, surprised, insisted:

"But why does he dance like that at his age?"

She shrugged her shoulders and turned red from the anger which was slowly rising within her and she cried out:

"Ah! yes, why? So that the people will think him young under his mask; so that the women will still take him for a young dandy and whisper nasty things into his ears; so that he can rub up against all their dirty skins, with their perfumes and powders and cosmetics. Ah! it's a fine business! What a life I have had for the last forty years! But we must first get him to bed, so that he may have no ill effects. Would you mind helping me? When he is like that I can't do anything with him alone."

The old man was sitting on his bed, with a tipsy look, his long white hair falling over his face. His companion looked at him with tender yet indignant eyes. She continued:

"Just see the fine head he has for his age, and yet he has to go and disguise himself in order to make people think that he is young. It's a perfect shame! Really, he has a fine head, monsieur! Wait, I'll show it to you before putting him to bed."

She went to a table on which stood the wash-basin, a pitcher of water, soap and a comb and brush. She took the brush, returned to the bed and pushed back the drunkard's tangled hair. In a few seconds she made him look like a model fit for a great painter, with his long white locks flowing on his neck. Then she stepped back in order to observe him, saying: "There! Isn't he fine for his age?"

"Very," agreed the doctor, who was beginning to be highly amused.

She added: "And if you had known him when he

was twenty-five! But we must get him to bed otherwise the drink will make him sick. Do you mind drawing off that sleeve? Higher—like that—that's right. Now the trousers. Wait, I will take his shoes off—that's right. Now, hold him upright while I open the bed. There—let us put him in. If you think that he is going to disturb himself when it is time for me to get in you are mistaken. I have to find a little corner any place I can. That doesn't bother him! Bah! You old pleasure seeker!"

As soon as he felt himself stretched out in his sheets the old man closed his eyes, opened them, closed them again, and over his whole face appeared an energetic resolve to sleep. The doctor examined him with an ever-increasing interest and asked: "Does he go to all the fancy balls and try to be a young man?"

"To all of them, monsieur, and he comes back to me in the morning in a deplorable condition. You see, it's regret that leads him on and that makes him put a pasteboard face over his own. Yes, the regret of no longer being what he was and of no longer making any conquests!"

He was sleeping now and beginning to snore. She looked at him with a pitying expression and continued: "Oh! how many conquests that man has made! More than one could believe, monsieur, more than the finest gentlemen of the world, than all the tenors and all the generals."

"Really? What did he do?"

"Oh! it will surprise you at first, as you did not know him in his palmy days. When I met him it was also at a ball, for he has always frequented them. As soon as I saw him I was caught—caught

like a fish on a hook. Ah! how pretty he was, monsieur, with his curly raven locks and black eyes as large as saucers! Indeed, he was good looking! He took me away that evening and I never have left him since, never, not even for a day, no matter what he did to me! Oh! he has often made it hard for me!"

The doctor asked: "Are you married?"

She answered simply: "Yes, monsieur, otherwise he would have dropped me as he did the others. I have been his wife and his servant, everything, everything that he wished. How he has made me cry—tears which I did not show him; for he would tell all his adventures to me—to me, monsieur—without understanding how it hurt me to listen."

"But what was his business?"

"That's so. I forgot to tell you. He was the foreman at Martel's—a foreman such as they never had had—an artist who averaged ten francs an hour."

"Martel?—who is Martel?"

"The hairdresser, monsieur, the great hairdresser of the Opera, who had all the actresses for customers. Yes, sir, all the smartest actresses had their hair dressed by Ambrose, and they would give him tips that made a fortune for him. Ah! monsieur, all the women are alike, yes, all of them. When a man pleases their fancy they offer themselves to him. It is so easy—and it hurt me so to hear about it. For he would tell me everything—he simply could not hold his tongue—it was impossible. Those things please the men so much! They seem to get even more enjoyment out of telling than doing.

"When I would see him coming in the evening, a little pale, with a pleased look and a bright eye, I

would say to myself: 'One more. I am sure that he has caught one more.' Then I felt a wild desire to question him, and then, again, not to know, to stop his talking if he should begin. And we would look at each other.

"I knew that he would not keep still, that he would come to the point. I could feel that from his manner, which seemed to laugh and say: 'I had a fine adventure to-day, Madeleine.' I would pretend to notice nothing, to guess nothing; I would set the table, bring on the soup and sit down opposite him.

"At those times, monsieur, it was as if my friendship for him had been crushed in my body as with a stone. It hurt. But he did not understand; he did not know; he felt a need to tell all those things to some one, to boast, to show how much he was loved, and I was the only one he had to whom he could talk—the only one. And I would have to listen and drink it in, like poison.

"He would begin to take his soup and then he would say: 'One more, Madeleine.'

"And I would think: 'Here it comes! Goodness! what a man! Why did I ever meet him?'

"Then he would begin: 'One more! And a beauty, too.' And it would be some little one from the Vaudeville or else from the Variétés, and some of the big ones, too, some of the most famous. He would tell me their names, how their apartments were furnished, everything, everything, monsieur. Heartbreaking details. And he would go over them and tell his story over again from beginning to end, so pleased with himself that I would pretend to laugh so that he would not get angry with me.

"Everything may not have been true! He liked

to glorify himself and was quite capable of inventing such things! They may perhaps also have been true! On those evenings he would pretend to be tired and wish to go to bed after supper. We would take supper at eleven, monsieur, for he could never get back from work earlier.

"When he had finished telling about his adventure he would walk round the room and smoke cigarettes, and he was so handsome, with his mustache and curly hair, that I would think: 'It's true, just the same, what he is telling. Since I myself am crazy about that man, why should not others be the same?' Then I would feel like crying, shrieking, running away and jumping out of the window while I was clearing the table and he was smoking. He would yawn in order to show how tired he was, and he would say two or three times before going to bed: 'Ah! how well I shall sleep this evening!'

"I bear him no ill will, because he did not know how he was hurting me. No, he could not know! He loved to boast about the women just as a peacock loves to show his feathers. He got to the point where he thought that all of them looked at him and desired him.

"It was hard when he grew old. Oh, monsieur, when I saw his first white hair I felt a terrible shock and then a great joy—a wicked joy—but so great, so great! I said to myself: 'It's the end—it's the end.' It seemed as if I were about to be released from prison. At last I could have him to myself, all to myself, when the others would no longer want him.

"It was one morning in bed. He was still sleeping and I leaned over him to wake him up with a

kiss, when I noticed in his curls, over his temple, a little thread which shone like silver. What a surprise! I should not have thought it possible! At first I thought of tearing it out so that he would not see it, but as I looked carefully I noticed another farther up. White hair! He was going to have white hair! My heart began to thump and perspiration stood out all over me, but away down at the bottom I was happy.

"It was mean to feel thus, but I did my housework with a light heart that morning, without waking him up, and, as soon as he opened his eyes of his own accord, I said to him: 'Do you know what I discovered while you were asleep?'

"'No.'

"'I found white hairs.'

"He started up as if I had tickled him and said angrily: 'It's not true!'

"'Yes, it is. There are four of them over your left temple.'

"He jumped out of bed and ran over to the mirror. He could not find them. Then I showed him the first one, the lowest, the little curly one, and I said: 'It's no wonder, after the life that you have been leading. In two years all will be over for you.'

"Well, monsieur, I had spoken true; two years later one could not recognize him. How quickly a man changes! He was still handsome, but he had lost his freshness, and the women no longer ran after him. Ah! what a life I led at that time! How he treated me! Nothing suited him. He left his trade to go into the hat business, in which he ate up all his money. Then he unsuccessfully tried to

be an actor, and finally he began to frequent public balls. Fortunately, he had had common sense enough to save a little something on which we now live. It is sufficient, but it is not enormous. And to think that at one time he had almost a fortune!

"Now you see what he does. This habit holds him like a frenzy. He has to be young; he has to dance with women who smell of perfume and cosmetics. You poor old darling!"

She was looking at her old snoring husband fondly, ready to cry. Then, gently tiptoeing up to him, she kissed his hair. The physician had risen and was getting ready to leave, finding nothing to say to this strange couple. Just as he was leaving she asked:

"Would you mind giving me your address? If he should grow worse, I could go and get you."

THE PENGUINS' ROCK

THIS is the season for penguins.

From April to the end of May, before the Parisian visitors arrive, one sees, all at once, on the little beach at Étretat several old gentlemen, booted and belted in shooting costume. They spend four or five days at the Hotel Hauville, disappear, and return again three weeks later. Then, after a fresh sojourn, they go away altogether.

One sees them again the following spring.

These are the last penguin hunters, what remain of the old set. There were about twenty enthusiasts thirty or forty years ago; now there are only a few of the enthusiastic sportsmen.

The penguin is a very rare bird of passage, with peculiar habits. It lives the greater part of the year in the latitude of Newfoundland and the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. But in the breeding season a flight of emigrants crosses the ocean and comes every year to the same spot to lay their eggs, to the Penguins' Rock near Étretat. They are found nowhere else, only there. They have always come there, have always been chased away, but return again, and will always return. As soon as the young birds are grown they all fly away, and disappear for a year.

Why do they not go elsewhere? Why not choose some other spot on the long white, unending cliff

that extends from the Pas-de-Calais to Havre? What force, what invincible instinct, what custom of centuries impels these birds to come back to this place? What first migration, what tempest, possibly, once cast their ancestors on this rock? And why do the children, the grandchildren, all the descendants of the first parents always return here?

There are not many of them, a hundred at most, as if one single family, maintaining the tradition, made this annual pilgrimage.

And each spring, as soon as the little wandering tribe has taken up its abode on the rock, the same sportsmen also reappear in the village. One knew them formerly when they were young; now they are old, but constant to the regular appointment which they have kept for thirty or forty years. They would not miss it for anything in the world.

It was an April evening in one of the later years. Three of the old sportsmen had arrived; one was missing—M. d'Arnelles.

He had written to no one, given no account of himself. But he was not dead, like so many of the rest; they would have heard of it. At length, tired of waiting for him, the other three sat down to table. Dinner was almost over when a carriage drove into the yard of the hotel, and the late comer presently entered the dining room.

He sat down, in a good humor, rubbing his hands, and ate with zest. When one of his comrades remarked with surprise at his being in a frock-coat, he replied quietly:

"Yes, I had no time to change my clothes."

They retired on leaving the table, for they had to set out before daybreak in order to take the birds unawares.

There is nothing so pretty as this sport, this early morning expedition.

At three o'clock in the morning the sailors awoke the sportsmen by throwing sand against the windows. They were ready in a few minutes and went down to the beach. Although it was still dark, the stars had paled a little. The sea ground the shingle on the beach. There was such a fresh breeze that it made one shiver slightly in spite of one's heavy clothing.

Presently two boats were pushed down the beach, by the sailors, with a sound as of tearing cloth, and were floated on the nearest waves. The brown sail was hoisted, swelled a little, fluttered, hesitated and swelling out again as round as a paunch, carried the boats towards the large arched entrance that could be faintly distinguished in the darkness.

The sky became clearer, the shadows seemed to melt away. The coast still seemed veiled, the great white coast, perpendicular as a wall.

They passed through the Manne-Porte, an enormous arch beneath which a ship could sail; they doubled the promontory of La Courtine, passed the little valley of Antifer and the cape of the same name; and suddenly caught sight of a beach on which some hundreds of seagulls were perched.

That was the Penguins' Rock. It was just a little protuberance of the cliff, and on the narrow ledges of rock the birds' heads might be seen watching the boats.

They remained there, motionless, not venturing

to fly off as yet. Some of them perched on the edges, seated upright, looked almost like bottles, for their little legs are so short that when they walk they glide along as if they were on rollers. When they start to fly they cannot make a spring and let themselves fall like stones almost down to the very men who are watching them.

They know their limitation and the danger to which it subjects them, and cannot make up their minds to fly away.

But the boatmen begin to shout, beating the sides of the boat with the wooden boat pins, and the birds, in affright, fly one by one into space until they reach the level of the waves. Then, moving their wings rapidly, they scud, scud along until they reach the open sea, if a shower of lead does not knock them into the water.

For an hour the firing is kept up, obliging them to give up, one after another. Sometimes the mother birds will not leave their nests, and are riddled with shot, causing drops of blood to spurt out on the white cliff, and the animal dies without having deserted her eggs.

The first day M. d'Arnelles fired at the birds with his habitual zeal; but when the party returned toward ten o'clock, beneath a brilliant sun, which cast great triangles of light on the white cliffs along the coast he appeared a little worried, and absent-minded, contrary to his accustomed manner.

As soon as they got on shore a kind of servant dressed in black came up to him and said something in a low tone. He seemed to reflect, hesitate, and then replied:

"No, to-morrow."

The following day they set out again. This time M. d'Arnelles frequently missed his aim, although the birds were close by. His friends teased him, asked him if he were in love, if some secret sorrow was troubling his mind and heart. At length he confessed.

"Yes, indeed, I have to leave soon, and that annoys me."

"What, you must leave? And why?"

"Oh, I have some business that calls me back. I cannot stay any longer."

They then talked of other matters.

As soon as breakfast was over the valet in black appeared. M. d'Arnelles ordered his carriage, and the man was leaving the room when the three sportsmen interfered, insisting, begging, and praying their friend to stay. One of them at last said:

"Come now, this cannot be a matter of such importance, for you have already waited two days."

M. d'Arnelles, altogether perplexed, began to think, evidently baffled, divided between pleasure and duty, unhappy and disturbed.

After reflecting for some time he stammered:

"The fact is—the fact is—I am not alone here. I have my son-in-law."

There were exclamations and shouts of "Your son-in-law! Where is he?"

He suddenly appeared confused and his face grew red.

"What! do you not know? Why—why—he is in the coach house. He is dead."

They were all silent in amazement.

M. d'Arnelles continued, more and more disturbed;

"I had the misfortune to lose him; and as I was taking the body to my house, in Briseville, I came round this way so as not to miss our appointment. But you can see that I cannot wait any longer."

Then one of the sportsmen, bolder than the rest, said:

"Well, but—since he is dead—it seems to me—that he can wait a day longer."

The others chimed in:

"That cannot be denied."

M. d'Arnelles appeared to be relieved of a great weight, but a little uneasy, nevertheless, he asked:

"But, frankly—do you think——"

The three others, as one man, replied:

"Parbleu! my dear boy, two days more or less can make no difference in his present condition."

And, perfectly calmly, the father-in-law turned to the undertaker's assistant, and said:

"Well, then, my friend, it will be the day after to-morrow."

A FAMILY

I WAS to see my old friend, Simon Radevin, of whom I had lost sight for fifteen years. At one time he was my most intimate friend, the friend who knows one's thoughts, with whom one passes long, quiet, happy evenings, to whom one tells one's secret love affairs, and who seems to draw out those rare, ingenious, delicate thoughts born of that sympathy that gives a sense of repose.

For years we had scarcely been separated; we had lived, travelled, thought and dreamed together; had liked the same things, had admired the same books, understood the same authors, trembled with the same sensations, and very often laughed at the same individuals, whom we understood completely by merely exchanging a glance.

Then he married. He married, quite suddenly, a little girl from the provinces, who had come to Paris in search of a husband. How in the world could that little thin, insipidly fair girl, with her weak hands, her light, vacant eyes, and her clear, silly voice, who was exactly like a hundred thousand marriageable dolls, have picked up that intelligent, clever young fellow? Can any one understand these things? No doubt he had hoped for happiness, simple, quiet and long-enduring happiness, in the arms of a good, tender and faithful woman; he had seen

all that in the transparent looks of that schoolgirl with light hair.

He had not dreamed of the fact that an active, living and vibrating man grows weary of everything as soon as he understands the stupid reality, unless, indeed, he becomes so brutalized that he understands nothing whatever.

What would he be like when I met him again? Still lively, witty, light-hearted and enthusiastic, or in a state of mental torpor induced by provincial life? A man may change greatly in the course of fifteen years!

The train stopped at a small station, and as I got out of the carriage, a stout, a very stout man with red cheeks and a big stomach rushed up to me with open arms, exclaiming: "George!" I embraced him, but I had not recognized him, and then I said, in astonishment: "By Jove! You have not grown thin!" And he replied with a laugh: "What did you expect? Good living, a good table and good nights! Eating and sleeping, that is my existence!"

I looked at him closely, trying to discover in that broad face the features I held so dear. His eyes alone had not changed, but I no longer saw the same expression in them, and I said to myself: "If the expression be the reflection of the mind, the thoughts in that head are not what they used to be formerly; those thoughts which I knew so well."

Yet his eyes were bright, full of happiness and friendship, but they had not that clear, intelligent expression which shows as much as words the brightness of the intellect. Suddenly he said: "Here are my two eldest children." A girl of four-

teen, who was almost a woman, and a boy of thirteen, in the dress of a boy from a *lycée,* came forward in a hesitating and awkward manner, and I said in a low voice: "Are they yours?" "Of course they are," he replied, laughing. "How many have you?" "Five! There are three more at home."

He said this in a proud, self-satisfied, almost triumphant manner, and I felt profound pity, mingled with a feeling of vague contempt, for this vainglorious and simple reproducer of his species.

I got into a carriage which he drove himself, and we set off through the town, a dull, sleepy, gloomy town where nothing was moving in the streets except a few dogs and two or three maidservants. Here and there a shopkeeper, standing at his door, took off his hat, and Simon returned his salute and told me the man's name; no doubt to show me that he knew all the inhabitants personally, and the thought struck me that he was thinking of becoming a candidate for the Chamber of Deputies, that dream of all those who bury themselves in the provinces.

We were soon out of the town, and the carriage turned into a garden that was an imitation of a park, and stopped in front of a turreted house, which tried to look like a château.

"That is my den," said Simon, so that I might compliment him on it. "It is charming," I replied.

A lady appeared on the steps, dressed for company, and with company phrases all ready prepared. She was no longer the light-haired, insipid girl I had seen in church fifteen years previously, but a stout lady in curls and flounces, one of those ladies of uncertain age, without intellect, without any of those things that go to make a woman. In short,

she was a mother, a stout, commonplace mother, a human breeding machine which procreates without any other preoccupation but her children and her cook-book.

She welcomed me, and I went into the hall, where three children, ranged according to their height, seemed set out for review, like firemen before a mayor, and I said: "Ah! ah! so there are the others?" Simon, radiant with pleasure, introduced them: "Jean, Sophie and Gontran."

The door of the drawing-room was open. I went in, and in the depths of an easy-chair, I saw something trembling, a man, an old, paralyzed man. Madame Radevin came forward and said: "This is my grandfather, monsieur; he is eighty-seven." And then she shouted into the shaking old man's ears: "This is a friend of Simon's, papa." The old gentleman tried to say "good-day" to me, and he muttered: "Oua, oua, oua," and waved his hand, and I took a seat saying: "You are very kind, monsieur."

Simon had just come in, and he said with a laugh: "So! You have made grandpapa's acquaintance. He is a treasure, that old man; he is the delight of the children. But he is so greedy that he almost kills himself at every meal; you have no idea what he would eat if he were allowed to do as he pleased. But you will see, you will see. He looks at all the sweets as if they were so many girls. You never saw anything so funny; you will see presently."

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I was then shown to my room, to change my dress for dinner, and hearing a great clatter behind me on the stairs, I turned round and saw that all the chil-

dren were following me behind their father; to do me honor, no doubt.

My windows looked out across a dreary, interminable plain, an ocean of grass, of wheat and of oats, without a clump of trees or any rising ground, a striking and melancholy picture of the life which they must be leading in that house.

A bell rang; it was for dinner, and I went downstairs. Madame Radevin took my arm in a ceremonious manner, and we passed into the dining-room. A footman wheeled in the old man in his armchair. He gave a greedy and curious look at the dessert, as he turned his shaking head with difficulty from one dish to the other.

Simon rubbed his hands: "You will be amused," he said; and all the children, understanding that I was going to be indulged with the sight of their greedy grandfather, began to laugh, while their mother merely smiled and shrugged her shoulders, and Simon, making a speaking trumpet of his hands, shouted at the old man: "This evening there is sweet creamed rice!" The wrinkled face of the grandfather brightened, and he trembled more violently, from head to foot, showing that he had understood and was very pleased. The dinner began.

"Just look!" Simon whispered. The old man did not like the soup, and refused to eat it; but he was obliged to do it for the good of his health, and the footman forced the spoon into his mouth, while the old man blew so energetically, so as not to swallow the soup, that it was scattered like a spray all over the table and over his neighbors. The children writhed with laughter at the spectacle, while their

father, who was also amused, said: "Is not the old man comical?"

During the whole meal they were taken up solely with him. He devoured the dishes on the table with his eyes, and tried to seize them and pull them over to him with his trembling hands. They put them almost within his reach, to see his useless efforts, his trembling clutches at them, the piteous appeal of his whole nature, of his eyes, of his mouth and of his nose as he smelt them, and he slobbered on his table napkin with eagerness, while uttering inarticulate grunts. And the whole family was highly amused at this horrible and grotesque scene.

Then they put a tiny morsel on his plate, and he ate with feverish gluttony, in order to get something more as soon as possible, and when the sweetened rice was brought in, he nearly had a fit, and groaned with greediness, and Gontran called out to him: "You have eaten too much already; you can have no more." And they pretended not to give him any. Then he began to cry; he cried and trembled more violently than ever, while all the children laughed. At last, however, they gave him his helping, a very small piece; and as he ate the first mouthful, he made a comical noise in his throat, and a movement with his neck as ducks do when they swallow too large a morsel, and when he had swallowed it, he began to stamp his feet, so as to get more.

I was seized with pity for this saddening and ridiculous Tantalus, and interposed on his behalf: "Come, give him a little more rice!" But Simon replied: "Oh! no, my dear fellow, if he were to eat too much, it would harm him, at his age."

I held my tongue, and thought over those words. Oh, ethics! Oh, logic! Oh, wisdom! At his age! So they deprived him of his only remaining pleasure out of regard for his health! His health! What would he do with it, inert and trembling wreck that he was? They were taking care of his life, so they said. His life? How many days? Ten, twenty, fifty, or a hundred? Why? For his own sake? Or to preserve for some time longer the spectacle of his impotent greediness in the family.

There was nothing left for him to do in this life, nothing whatever. He had one single wish left, one sole pleasure; why not grant him that last solace until he died?

After we had played cards for a long time, I went up to my room and to bed; I was low-spirited and sad, sad, sad! and I sat at my window. Not a sound could be heard outside but the beautiful warbling of a bird in a tree, somewhere in the distance. No doubt the bird was singing in a low voice during the night, to lull his mate, who was asleep on her eggs.

And I thought of my poor friend's five children, and pictured him to myself, snoring by the side of his ugly wife.

SUICIDES

To Georges Legrand

HARDLY a day goes by without our reading a news item like the following in some newspaper:

"On Wednesday night the people living in No. 40 Rue de ——, were awakened by two successive shots. The explosions seemed to come from the apartment occupied by M. X——. The door was broken in and the man was found bathed in his blood, still holding in one hand the revolver with which he had taken his life.

"M. X—— was fifty-seven years of age, enjoying a comfortable income, and had everything necessary to make him happy. No cause can be found for his action."

What terrible grief, what unknown suffering, hidden despair, secret wounds drive these presumably happy persons to suicide? We search, we imagine tragedies of love, we suspect financial troubles, and, as we never find anything definite, we apply to these deaths the word "mystery."

A letter found on the desk of one of these "suicides without cause," and written during his last night, beside his loaded revolver, has come into our hands. We deem it rather interesting. It reveals none of those great catastrophes which we always expect to find behind these acts of despair; but it shows us the slow succession of the little vexations of life, the disintegration of a lonely existence,

whose dreams have disappeared; it gives the reason for these tragic ends, which only nervous and high-strung people can understand.

Here it is:

"It is midnight. When I have finished this letter I shall kill myself. Why? I shall attempt to give the reasons, not for those who may read these lines, but for myself, to kindle my waning courage, to impress upon myself the fatal necessity of this act which can, at best, be only deferred.

"I was brought up by simple-minded parents who were unquestioning believers. And I believed as they did.

"My dream lasted a long time. The last veil has just been torn from my eyes.

"During the last few years a strange change has been taking place within me. All the events of Life, which formerly had to me the glow of a beautiful sunset, are now fading away. The true meaning of things has appeared to me in its brutal reality; and the true reason for love has bred in me disgust even for this poetic sentiment: 'We are the eternal toys of foolish and charming illusions, which are always being renewed.'

"On growing older, I had become partly reconciled to the awful mystery of life, to the uselessness of effort; when the emptiness of everything appeared to me in a new light, this evening, after dinner.

"Formerly, I was happy! Everything pleased me: the passing women, the appearance of the streets, the place where I lived; and I even took an interest in the cut of my clothes. But the repetition

of the same sights has had the result of filling my heart with weariness and disgust, just as one would feel were one to go every night to the same theatre.

"For the last thirty years I have been rising at the same hour; and, at the same restaurant, for thirty years, I have been eating at the same hours the same dishes brought me by different waiters.

"I have tried travel. The loneliness which one feels in strange places terrified me. I felt so alone, so small on the earth that I quickly started on my homeward journey.

"But here the unchanging expression of my furniture, which has stood for thirty years in the same place, the smell of my apartments (for, with time, each dwelling takes on a particular odor) each night, these and other things disgust me and make me sick of living thus.

"Everything repeats itself endlessly. The way in which I put my key in the lock, the place where I always find my matches, the first object which meets my eye when I enter the room, make me feel like jumping out of the window and putting an end to those monotonous events from which we can never escape.

"Each day, when I shave, I feel an inordinate desire to cut my throat; and my face, which I see in the little mirror, always the same, with soap on my cheeks, has several times made me weak from sadness.

"Now I even hate to be with people whom I used to meet with pleasure; I know them so well, I can tell just what they are going to say and what I am going to answer. Each brain is like a circus, where the same horse keeps circling around eternally. We

must circle round always, around the same ideas, the same joys, the same pleasures, the same habits, the same beliefs, the same sensations of disgust.

"The fog was terrible this evening. It enfolded the boulevard, where the street lights were dimmed and looked like smoking candles. A heavier weight than usual oppressed me. Perhaps my digestion was bad.

"For good digestion is everything in life. It gives the inspiration to the artist, amorous desires to young people, clear ideas to thinkers, the joy of life to everybody, and it also allows one to eat heartily (which is one of the greatest pleasures). A sick stomach induces scepticism, unbelief, nightmares and the desire for death. I have often noticed this fact. Perhaps I would not kill myself, if my digestion had been good this evening.

"When I sat down in the arm-chair where I have been sitting every day for thirty years, I glanced around me, and just then I was seized by such a terrible distress that I thought I must go mad.

"I tried to think of what I could do to run away from myself. Every occupation struck me as being worse even than inaction. Then I bethought me of putting my papers in order.

"For a long time I have been thinking of clearing out my drawers; for, for the last thirty years, I have been throwing my letters and bills pell-mell into the same desk, and this confusion has often caused me considerable trouble. But I feel such moral and physical laziness at the sole idea of putting anything in order that I have never had the courage to begin this tedious business.

"I therefore opened my desk, intending to

choose among my old papers and destroy the majority of them.

"At first I was bewildered by this array of documents, yellowed by age, then I chose one.

"Oh! if you cherish life, never disturb the burial place of old letters!

"And if, perchance, you should, take the contents by the handful, close your eyes that you may not read a word, so that you may not recognize some forgotten handwriting which may plunge you suddenly into a sea of memories; carry these papers to the fire; and when they are in ashes, crush them to an invisible powder, or otherwise you are lost—just as I have been lost for an hour.

"The first letters which I read did not interest me greatly. They were recent, and came from living men whom I still meet quite often, and whose presence does not move me to any great extent. But all at once one envelope made me start. My name was traced on it in a large, bold handwriting; and suddenly tears came to my eyes. That letter was from my dearest friend, the companion of my youth, the confidant of my hopes; and he appeared before me so clearly, with his pleasant smile and his hand outstretched, that a cold shiver ran down my back. Yes, yes, the dead come back, for I saw him! Our memory is a more perfect world than the universe: it gives back life to those who no longer exist.

"With trembling hand and dimmed eyes I reread everything that he told me, and in my poor sobbing heart I felt a wound so painful that I began to groan as a man whose bones are slowly being crushed.

"Then I travelled over my whole life, just as one

travels along a river. I recognized people, so long forgotten that I no longer knew their names. Their faces alone lived in me. In my mother's letters I saw again the old servants, the shape of our house and the little insignificant odds and ends which cling to our minds.

"Yes, I suddenly saw again all my mother's old gowns, the different styles which she adopted and the several ways in which she dressed her hair. She haunted me especially in a silk dress, trimmed with old lace; and I remembered something she said one day when she was wearing this dress. She said: 'Robert, my child, if you do not stand up straight you will be round-shouldered all your life.'

"Then, opening another drawer, I found myself face to face with memories of tender passions: a dancing-pump, a torn handkerchief, even a garter, locks of hair and dried flowers. Then the sweet romances of my life, whose living heroines are now white-haired, plunged me into the deep melancholy of things. Oh, the young brows where blond locks curl, the caress of the hands, the glance which speaks, the hearts which beat, that smile which promises the lips, those lips which promise the embrace! And the first kiss—that endless kiss which makes you close your eyes, which drowns all thought in the immeasurable joy of approaching possession!

"Taking these old pledges of former love in both my hands, I covered them with furious caresses, and in my soul, torn by these memories, I saw them each again at the hour of surrender; and I suffered a torture more cruel than all the tortures invented in all the fables about hell.

"One last letter remained. It was written by me

and dictated fifty years ago by my writing teacher. Here it is:

"'My Dear Little Mamma:

"'I am seven years old to-day. It is the age of reason. I take advantage of it to thank you for having brought me into this world.

"'Your little son, who loves you,

"'Robert.'

"It is all over. I had gone back to the beginning, and suddenly I turned my glance on what remained to me of life. I saw hideous and lonely old age, and approaching infirmities, and everything over and gone. And nobody near me!

"My revolver is here, on the table. I am loading it. . . . Never reread your old letters!"

And that is how many men come to kill themselves; and we search in vain to discover some great sorrow in their lives.

DISCOVERY

THE steamer was crowded with people and the crossing promised to be good. I was going from Havre to Trouville.

The ropes were thrown off, the whistle blew for the last time, the whole boat started to tremble, and the great wheels began to revolve, slowly at first, and then with ever-increasing rapidity.

We were gliding along the pier, black with people. Those on board were waving their handkerchiefs, as though they were leaving for America, and their friends on shore were answering in the same manner.

The big July sun was shining down on the red parasols, the light dresses, the joyous faces and on the ocean, barely stirred by a ripple. When we were out of the harbor, the little vessel swung round the big curve and pointed her nose toward the distant shore which was barely visible through the early morning mist. On our left was the broad estuary of the Seine, her muddy water, which never mingles with that of the ocean, making large yellow streaks clearly outlined against the immense sheet of the pure green sea.

As soon as I am on a boat I feel the need of walking to and fro, like a sailor on watch. Why? I do not know. Therefore I began to thread my way along the deck through the crowd of travellers. Suddenly I heard my name called. I turned around. I

beheld one of my old friends, Henri Sidoine, whom I had not seen for ten years.

We shook hands and continued our walk together, talking of one thing or another. Suddenly Sidoine, who had been observing the crowd of passengers, cried out angrily:

"It's disgusting, the boat is full of English people!"

It was indeed full of them. The men were standing about, looking over the ocean with an all-important air, as though to say: "We are the English, the lords of the sea! Here we are!"

The young girls, formless, with shoes which reminded one of the naval constructions of their fatherland, wrapped in multi-colored shawls, were smiling vacantly at the magnificent scenery. Their small heads, planted at the top of their long bodies, wore English hats of the strangest build.

And the old maids, thinner yet, opening their characteristic jaws to the wind, seemed to threaten one with their long, yellow teeth. On passing them, one could notice the smell of rubber and of tooth wash.

Sidoine repeated, with growing anger:

"Disgusting! Can we never stop their coming to France?"

I asked, smiling:

"What have you got against them? As far as I am concerned, they don't worry me."

He snapped out:

"Of course they don't worry you! But *I* married one of them."

I stopped and laughed at him.

"Go ahead and tell me about it. Does she make you very unhappy?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"No, not exactly."

"Then she—is not true to you?"

"Unfortunately, she is. That would be cause for a divorce, and I could get rid of her."

"Then I'm afraid I don't understand!"

"You don't understand? I'm not surprised. Well, she simply learned how to speak French—that's all! Listen.

"I didn't have the least desire of getting married when I went to spend the summer at Étretat two years ago. There is nothing more dangerous than watering-places. You have no idea how it suits young girls. Paris is the place for women and the country for young girls.

"Donkey rides, surf-bathing, breakfast on the grass, all these things are traps set for the marriageable man. And, really, there is nothing prettier than a child about eighteen, running through a field or picking flowers along the road.

"I made the acquaintance of an English family who were stopping at the same hotel where I was. The father looked like those men you see over there, and the mother was like all other Englishwomen.

"They had two sons, the kind of boys who play rough games with balls, bats or rackets from morning till night; then came two daughters, the elder a dry, shrivelled-up Englishwoman, the younger a dream of beauty, a heavenly blonde. When those chits make up their minds to be pretty, they are divine. This one had blue eyes, the kind of blue which seems to contain all the poetry, all the dreams, all the hopes and happiness of the world!

"What an infinity of dreams is caused by two such

eyes! How well they answer the dim, eternal question of our heart!

"It must not be forgotten either that we Frenchmen adore foreign women. As soon as we meet a Russian, an Italian, a Swede, a Spaniard, or an Englishwoman with a pretty face, we immediately fall in love with her. We enthuse over everything which comes from outside—clothes, hats, gloves, guns and—women. But what a blunder!

"I believe that that which pleases us in foreign women is their accent. As soon as a woman speaks our language badly we think she is charming, if she uses the wrong word she is exquisite and if she jabbers in an entirely unintelligible jargon, she becomes irresistible.

"My little English girl, Kate, spoke a language to be marvelled at. At the beginning I could understand nothing, she invented so many new words; then I fell absolutely in love with this queer, amusing dialect. All maimed, strange, ridiculous terms became delightful in her mouth. Every evening, on the terrace of the Casino, we had long conversations which resembled spoken enigmas.

"I married her! I loved her wildly, as one can only love in a dream. For true lovers only love a dream which has taken the form of a woman.

"Well, my dear fellow, the most foolish thing I ever did was to give my wife a French teacher. As long as she slaughtered the dictionary and tortured the grammar I adored her. Our conversations were simple. They revealed to me her surprising gracefulness and matchless elegance; they showed her to me as a wonderful speaking jewel, a living doll made to be kissed, knowing, after a fashion, how to express

what she loved. She reminded me of the pretty little toys which say 'papa' and 'mamma' when you pull a string.

"Now she talks—badly—very badly. She makes as many mistakes as ever—but I can understand her.

"I have opened my doll to look inside—and I have seen. And how I have to talk to her!

"Ah! you don't know, as I do, the opinions, the ideas, the theories of a well-educated young English girl, whom I can blame in nothing, and who repeats to me from morning till night sentences from a French reader prepared in England for the use of young ladies' schools.

"You have seen those cotillon favors, those pretty gilt papers, which enclose candies with an abominable taste. I have one of them. I tore it open. I wished to eat what was inside and it disgusted me so that I feel nauseated at seeing her compatriots.

"I have married a parrot to whom some old English governess might have taught French. Do you understand?"

* * * * * * * *

The harbor of Trouville was now showing its wooden piers covered with people.

I said:

"Where is your wife?"

He answered:

"I took her back to Étretat."

"And you, where are you going?"

"I? Oh, I am going to rest up here at Trouville."

Then, after a pause, he added:

"You have no idea what a fool a woman can be at times!"

THE ACCURSED BREAD

DADDY TAILLE had three daughters: Anna, the eldest, who was scarcely ever mentioned in the family; Rose, the second girl, who was eighteen, and Clara, the youngest, who was a girl of fifteen.

Old Taille was a widower and a foreman in M. Lebrument's button manufactory. He was a very upright man, very well thought of, abstemious; in fact, a sort of model workman. He lived at Havre, in the Rue d'Angoulême.

When Anna ran away from home the old man flew into a fearful rage. He threatened to kill the head clerk in a large draper's establishment in that town, whom he suspected. After a time, when he was told by various people that she was very steady and investing money in government securities, that she was no gadabout, but was a great friend of Monsieur Dubois, who was a judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, the father was appeased.

He even showed some anxiety as to how she was getting on, and asked some of her old friends who had been to see her, and when told that she had her own furniture, and that her mantelpiece was covered with vases and the walls with pictures, that there were clocks and carpets everywhere, he gave a broad contented smile. He had been working for

thirty years to get together a wretched five or six thousand francs. This girl was evidently no fool.

One fine morning the son of Touchard, the cooper, at the other end of the street, came and asked him for the hand of Rose, the second girl. The old man's heart began to beat, for the Touchards were rich and in a good position. He was decidedly lucky with his girls.

The marriage was agreed upon, and it was settled that it should be a grand affair, and the wedding dinner was to be held at Sainte-Adresse, at Mother Jusa's restaurant. It would cost a lot certainly, but never mind, it did not matter just for once in a way.

But one morning, just as the old man was going home to luncheon with his two daughters, the door opened suddenly, and Anna appeared. She was well dressed and looked undeniably pretty and nice. She threw her arms round her father's neck before he could say a word, then fell into her sisters' arms with many tears and then asked for a plate, so that she might share the family soup. Taille was moved to tears in his turn and said several times:

"That is right, dear, that is right."

Then she told them about herself. She did not wish Rose's wedding to take place at Sainte-Adresse —certainly not. It should take place at her house and would cost her father nothing. She had settled everything and arranged everything, so it was "no good to say any more about it—there!"

"Very well, my dear! very well!" the old man said; "we will leave it so." But then he felt some doubt. Would the Touchards consent? But Rose, the bride-elect, was surprised and asked: "Why

should they object, I should like to know? Just leave that to me; I will talk to Philip about it."

She mentioned it to her lover the very same day, and he declared it would suit him exactly. Father and Mother Touchard were naturally delighted at the idea of a good dinner which would cost them nothing and said:

"You may be quite sure that everything will be in first-rate style."

They asked to be allowed to bring a friend, Madame Florence, the cook on the first floor, and Anna agreed to everything.

The wedding was fixed for the last Tuesday of the month.

II

After the civil formalities and the religious ceremony the wedding party went to Anna's house. Among those whom the Tailles had brought was a cousin of a certain age, a Monsieur Sauvetanin, a man given to philosophical reflections, serious, and always very self-possessed, and Madame Lamondois, an old aunt.

Monsieur Sautevanin had been told off to give Anna his arm, as they were looked upon as the two most important persons in the company.

As soon as they had arrived at the door of Anna's house she let go her companion's arm, and ran on ahead, saying: "I will show you the way," and ran upstairs while the invited guests followed more slowly; and, when they got upstairs, she stood on one side to let them pass, and they rolled their eyes and turned their heads in all directions to admire this mysterious and luxurious dwelling.

The table was laid in the drawing-room, as the dining-room had been thought too small. Extra knives, forks and spoons had been hired from a neighboring restaurant, and decanters stood full of wine under the rays of the sun which shone in through the window.

The ladies went into the bedroom to take off their shawls and bonnets, and Father Touchard, who was standing at the door, made funny and suggestive signs to the men, with many a wink and nod. Daddy Taille, who thought a great deal of himself, looked with fatherly pride at his child's well-furnished rooms and went from one to the other, holding his hat in his hand, making a mental inventory of everything, and walking like a verger in a church.

Anna went backward and forward, ran about giving orders and hurrying on the wedding feast. Soon she appeared at the door of the dining-room and cried: "Come here, all of you, for a moment," and as the twelve guests entered the room they saw twelve glasses of Madeira on a small table.

Rose and her husband had their arms round each other's waists and were kissing each other in every corner. Monsieur Sauvetanin never took his eyes off Anna.

They sat down, and the wedding breakfast began, the relations sitting at one end of the table and the young people at the other. Madame Touchard, the mother, presided on the right and the bride on the left. Anna looked after everybody, saw that the glasses were kept filled and the plates well supplied. The guests evidently felt a certain respectful embarrassment at the sight of all the sumptuousness of the rooms and at the lavish manner in which they were

treated. They all ate heartily of the good things provided, but there were no jokes such as are prevalent at weddings of that sort; it was all too grand, and it made them feel uncomfortable. Old Madame Touchard, who was fond of a bit of fun, tried to enliven matters a little, and at the beginning of the dessert she exclaimed: "I say, Philip, do sing us something." The neighbors in their street considered that he had the finest voice in all Havre.

The bridegroom got up, smiled, and, turning to his sister-in-law, from politeness and gallantry, tried to think of something suitable for the occasion, something serious and correct, to harmonize with the seriousness of the repast.

Anna had a satisfied look on her face, and leaned back in her chair to listen, and all assumed looks of attention, though prepared to smile should smiles be called for.

The singer announced "The Accursed Bread," and, extending his right arm, which made his coat ruck up into his neck, he began.

It was decidedly long, three verses of eight lines each, with the last line and the last but one repeated twice.

All went well for the first two verses; they were the usual commonplaces about bread gained by honest labor and by dishonesty. The aunt and the bride wept outright. The cook, who was present, at the end of the first verse looked at a roll which she held in her hand, with streaming eyes, as if it applied to her, while all applauded vigorously. At the end of the second verse the two servants, who were standing with their backs to the wall, joined loudly in the chorus, and the aunt and the bride wept outright.

Daddy Taille blew his nose with the noise of a trombone, and old Touchard brandished a whole loaf half over the table, and the cook shed silent tears on the crust which she was still holding.

Amid the general emotion Monsieur Sauvetanin said:

"That is the right sort of song; very different from the nasty, risky things one generally hears at weddings."

Anna, who was visibly affected, kissed her hand to her sister and pointed to her husband with an affectionate nod, as if to congratulate her.

Intoxicated by his success, the young man continued, and unfortunately the last verse contained words about the "bread of dishonor" gained by young girls who had been led astray. No one took up the refrain about this bread, supposed to be eaten with tears, except old Touchard and the two servants. Anna had grown deadly pale and cast down her eyes, while the bridegroom looked from one to the other without understanding the reason for this sudden coldness, and the cook hastily dropped the crust as if it were poisoned.

Monsieur Sauvetanin said solemnly, in order to save the situation: "That last couplet is not at all necessary"; and Daddy Taille, who had got red up to his ears, looked round the table fiercely.

Then Anna, her eyes swimming in tears, told the servants in the faltering voice of a woman trying to stifle her sobs, to bring the champagne.

All the guests were suddenly seized with exuberant joy, and all their faces became radiant again. And when old Touchard, who had seen, felt and understood nothing of what was going on, and pointing

to the guests so as to emphazise his words, sang the last words of the refrain:

"Children, I warn you all to eat not of that bread," the whole company, when they saw the champagne bottles, with their necks covered with gold foil, appear, burst out singing, as if electrified by the sight:

"Children, I warn you all to eat not of that bread."

Beside Schopenhauer's Corpse

He was slowly dying, as consumptives die. I saw him each day, about two o'clock, sitting beneath the hotel windows on a bench in the promenade, looking out on the calm sea. He remained for some time without moving, in the heat of the sun, gazing mournfully at the Mediterranean. Every now and then, he cast a glance at the lofty mountains with beclouded summits that shut in Mentone; then, with a very slow movement, he would cross his long legs, so thin that they seemed like two bones, around which fluttered the cloth of his trousers, and he would open a book, always the same book. And then he did not stir any more, but read on, read on with his eye and his mind; all his wasting body seemed to read, all his soul plunged, lost, disappeared, in this book, up to the hour when the cool air made him cough a little. Then, he got up and re-entered the hotel.

He was a tall German, with fair beard, who breakfasted and dined in his own room, and spoke to nobody.

A vague curiosity attracted me to him. One day, I sat down by his side, having taken up a book, too, to keep up appearances, a volume of Musset's poems.

And I began to look through "Rolla."

Suddenly, my neighbor said to me, in good French:

"Do you know German, monsieur?"

"Not at all, monsieur."

"I am sorry for that. Since chance has thrown us side by side, I could have lent you, I could have shown you, an inestimable thing—this book which I hold in my hand."

"What is it, pray?"

"It is a copy of my master, Schopenhauer, annotated with his own hand. All the margins, as you may see, are covered with his handwriting."

I took the book from him reverently, and I gazed at these forms incomprehensible to me, but which revealed the immortal thoughts of the greatest shatterer of dreams who had ever dwelt on earth.

And Musset's verses arose in my memory:

"Hast thou found out, Voltaire, that it is bliss to die,
And does thy hideous smile over thy bleached bones
fly?"

And involuntarily I compared the childish sarcasm, the religious sarcasm of Voltaire with the irresistible irony of the German philosopher whose influence is henceforth ineffaceable.

Let us protest and let us be angry, let us be indignant, or let us be enthusiastic, Schopenhauer has marked humanity with the seal of his disdain and of his disenchantment.

A disabused pleasure-seeker, he overthrew beliefs, hopes, poetic ideals and chimeras, destroyed the aspirations, ravaged the confidence of souls, killed love, dragged down the chivalrous worship of

women, crushed the illusions of hearts, and accomplished the most gigantic task ever attempted by scepticism. He spared nothing with his mocking spirit, and exhausted everything. And even to-day those who execrate him seem to carry in their own souls particles of his thought.

"So, then, you were intimately acquainted with Schopenhauer?" I said to the German.

He smiled sadly.

"Up to the time of his death, monsieur."

And he spoke to me about the philosopher and told me about the almost supernatural impression which this strange being made on all who came near him.

He gave me an account of the interview of the old iconoclast with a French politician, a doctrinaire Republican, who wanted to get a glimpse of this man, and found him in a noisy tavern, seated in the midst of his disciples, dry, wrinkled, laughing with an unforgettable laugh, attacking and tearing to pieces ideas and beliefs with a single word, as a dog tears with one bite of his teeth the tissues with which he plays.

He repeated for me the comment of this Frenchman as he went away, astonished and terrified: "I thought I had spent an hour with the devil."

Then he added:

"He had, indeed, monsieur, a frightful smile, which terrified us even after his death. I can tell you an anecdote about it that is not generally known, if it would interest you."

And he began, in a languid voice, interrupted by frequent fits of coughing.

"Schopenhauer had just died, and it was ar-

ranged that we should watch, in turn, two by two, till morning.

"He was lying in a large apartment, very simple, vast and gloomy. Two wax candles were burning on the stand by the bedside.

"It was midnight when I went on watch, together with one of our comrades. The two friends whom we replaced had left the apartment, and we came and sat down at the foot of the bed.

"The face was not changed. It was laughing. That pucker which we knew so well lingered still around the corners of the lips, and it seemed to us that he was about to open his eyes, to move and to speak. His thought, or rather his thoughts, enveloped us. We felt ourselves more than ever in the atmosphere of his genius, absorbed, possessed by him. His domination seemed to be even more sovereign now that he was dead. A feeling of mystery was blended with the power of this incomparable spirit.

"The bodies of these men disappear, but they themselves remain; and in the night which follows the cessation of their heart's pulsation I assure you, monsieur, they are terrifying.

"And in hushed tones we talked aout him, recalling to mind certain sayings, certain formulas of his, those startling maxims which are like jets of flame flung, in a few words, into the darkness of the Unknown Life.

" 'It seems to me that he is going to speak,' said my comrade. And we stared with uneasiness bordering on fear at the motionless face, with its eternal laugh. Gradually, we began to feel ill at ease, oppressed, on the point of fainting. I faltered:

"'I don't know what is the matter with me, but, I assure you I am not well.'

"And at that moment we noticed that there was an unpleasant odor from the corpse.

"Then, my comrade suggested that we should go into the adjoining room, and leave the door open; and I assented to his proposal.

"I took one of the wax candles which burned on the stand, and I left the second behind. Then we went and sat down at the other end of the adjoining apartment, in such a position that we could see the bed and the corpse, clearly revealed by the light.

"But he still held possession of us. One would have said that his immaterial essence, liberated, free, all-powerful and dominating, was flitting around us. And sometimes, too, the dreadful odor of the decomposed body came toward us and penetrated us, sickening and indefinable.

"Suddenly a shiver passed through our bones: a sound, a slight sound, came from the death-chamber. Immediately we fixed our glances on him, and we saw, yes, monsieur, we saw distinctly, both of us, something white pass across the bed, fall on the carpet, and vanish under an armchair.

"We were on our feet before we had time to think of anything, distracted by stupefying terror, ready to run away. Then we stared at each other. We were horribly pale. Our hearts throbbed fiercely enough to have raised the clothing on our chests. I was the first to speak:

"'Did you see?'

"'Yes, I saw.'

"'Can it be that he is not dead?'

"'Why, when the body is putrefying?'

"'What are we to do?'

"My companion said in a hesitating tone:

"'We must go and look.'

"I took our wax candle and entered first, glancing into all the dark corners in the large apartment. Nothing was moving now, and I approached the bed. But I stood transfixed with stupor and fright: Schopenhauer was no longer laughing! He was grinning in a horrible fashion, with his lips pressed together and deep hollows in his cheeks. I stammered out:

"'He is not dead!'

"But the terrible odor ascended to my nose and stifled me. And I no longer moved, but kept staring fixedly at him, terrified as if in the presence of an apparition.

"Then my companion, having seized the other wax candle, bent forward. Next, he touched my arm without uttering a word. I followed his glance, and saw on the ground, under the armchair by the side of the bed, standing out white on the dark carpet, and open as if to bite, Schopenhauer's set of artificial teeth.

"The work of decomposition, loosening the jaws, had made it jump out of the mouth.

"I was really frightened that day, monsieur."

And as the sun was sinking toward the glittering sea, the consumptive German rose from his seat, gave me a parting bow, and retired into the hotel.

THE WOLF

THIS is what the old Marquis d'Arville told us after St. Hubert's dinner at the house of the Baron des Ravels.

We had killed a stag that day. The marquis was the only one of the guests who had not taken part in this chase. He never hunted.

During that long repast we had talked about hardly anything but the slaughter of animals. The ladies themselves were interested in bloody and exaggerated tales, and the orators imitated the attacks and the combats of men against beasts, raised their arms, romanced in a thundering voice.

M. d'Arville talked well, in a certain flowery, high-sounding, but effective style. He must have told this story frequently, for he told it fluently, never hesitating for words, choosing them with skill to make his description vivid.

Gentlemen, I have never hunted, neither did my father, nor my grandfather, nor my great-grandfather. This last was the son of a man who hunted more than all of you put together. He died in 1764. I will tell you the story of his death.

His name was Jean. He was married, father of that child who became my great-grandfather, and he lived with his younger brother, François d'Arville, in our castle in Lorraine, in the midst of the forest.

François d'Arville had remained a bachelor for love of the chase.

They both hunted from one end of the year to the other, without stopping and seemingly without fatigue. They loved only hunting, understood nothing else, talked only of that, lived only for that.

They had at heart that one passion, which was terrible and inexorable. It consumed them, had completely absorbed them, leaving room for no other thought.

They had given orders that they should not be interrupted in the chase for any reason whatever. My great-grandfather was born while his father was following a fox, and Jean d'Arville did not stop the chase, but exclaimed: "The deuce! The rascal might have waited till after the view-halloo!"

His brother François was still more infatuated. On rising he went to see the dogs, then the horses, then he shot little birds about the castle until the time came to hunt some large game.

In the countryside they were called M. le Marquis and M. le Cadet, the nobles then not being at all like the chance nobility of our time, which wishes to establish an hereditary hierarchy in titles; for the son of a marquis is no more a count, nor the son of a viscount a baron, than a son of a general is a colonel by birth. But the contemptible vanity of to-day finds profit in that arrangement.

My ancestors were unusually tall, bony, hairy, violent and vigorous. The younger, still taller than the older, had a voice so strong that, according to a legend of which he was proud, all the leaves of the forest shook when he shouted.

When they were both mounted to set out hunting,

it must have been a superb sight to see those two giants straddling their huge horses.

Now, toward the midwinter of that year, 1764, the frosts were excessive, and the wolves became ferocious.

They even attacked belated peasants, roamed at night outside the houses, howled from sunset to sunrise, and robbed the stables.

And soon a rumor began to circulate. People talked of a colossal wolf with gray fur, almost white, who had eaten two children, gnawed off a woman's arm, strangled all the watch dogs in the district, and even come without fear into the farmyards. The people in the houses affirmed that they had felt his breath, and that it made the flame of the lights flicker. And soon a panic ran through all the province. No one dared go out any more after nightfall. The darkness seemed haunted by the image of the beast.

The brothers d'Arville determined to find and kill him, and several times they brought together all the gentlemen of the country to a great hunt.

They beat the forests and searched the coverts in vain; they never met him. They killed wolves, but not that one. And every night after a *battue* the beast, as if to avenge himself, attacked some traveller or killed some one's cattle, always far from the place where they had looked for him.

Finally, one night he stole into the pigpen of the Château d'Arville and ate the two fattest pigs.

The brothers were roused to anger, considering this attack as a direct insult and a defiance. They took their strong bloodhounds, used to pursue dan-

gerous animals, and they set off to hunt, their hearts filled with rage.

From dawn until the hour when the empurpled sun descended behind the great naked trees, they beat the woods without finding anything.

At last, furious and disgusted, both were returning, walking their horses along a lane bordered with hedges, and they marvelled that their skill as huntsmen should be baffled by this wolf, and they were suddenly seized with a mysterious fear.

The elder said:

"That beast is not an ordinary one. You would say it had a mind like a man."

The younger answered:

"Perhaps we should have a bullet blessed by our cousin, the bishop, or pray some priest to pronounce the words which are needed."

Then they were silent.

Jean continued:

"Look how red the sun is. The great wolf will do some harm to-night."

He had hardly finished speaking when his horse reared; that of François began to kick. A large thicket covered with dead leaves opened before them, and a mammoth beast, entirely gray, jumped up and ran off through the wood.

Both uttered a kind of grunt of joy, and bending over the necks of their heavy horses, they threw them forward with an impulse from all their body, hurling them on at such a pace, urging them, hurrying them away, exciting them so with voice and with gesture and with spur that the experienced riders seemed to be carrying the heavy beasts between

their thighs and to bear them off as if they were flying.

Thus they went, plunging through the thickets, dashing across the beds of streams, climbing the hillsides, descending the gorges, and blowing the horn as loud as they could to attract their people and the dogs.

And now, suddenly, in that mad race, my ancestor struck his forehead against an enormous branch which split his skull; and he fell dead on the ground, while his frightened horse took himself off, disappearing in the gloom which enveloped the woods.

The younger d'Arville stopped quick, leaped to the earth, seized his brother in his arms, and saw that the brains were escaping from the wound with the blood.

Then he sat down beside the body, rested the head, disfigured and red, on his knees, and waited, regarding the immobile face of his elder brother. Little by little a fear possessed him, a strange fear which he had never felt before, the fear of the dark, the fear of loneliness, the fear of the deserted wood, and the fear also of the weird wolf who had just killed his brother to avenge himself upon them both.

The gloom thickened; the acute cold made the trees crack. François got up, shivering, unable to remain there longer, feeling himself growing faint. Nothing was to be heard, neither the voice of the dogs nor the sound of the horns—all was silent along the invisible horizon; and this mournful silence of the frozen night had something about it terrific and strange.

He seized in his immense hands the great body of

Jean, straightened it, and laid it across the saddle to carry it back to the château; then he went on his way softly, his mind troubled as if he were in a stupor, pursued by horrible and fear-giving images.

And all at once, in the growing darkness a great shape crossed his path. It was the beast. A shock of terror shook the hunter; something cold, like a drop of water, seemed to glide down his back, and, like a monk haunted of the devil, he made a great sign of the cross, dismayed at this abrupt return of the horrible prowler. But his eyes fell again on the inert body before him, and passing abruptly from fear to anger, he shook with an indescribable rage.

Then he spurred his horse and rushed after the wolf.

He followed it through the copses, the ravines, and the tall trees, traversing woods which he no longer recognized, his eyes fixed on the white speck which fled before him through the night.

His horse also seemed animated by a force and strength hitherto unknown. It galloped straight ahead with outstretched neck, striking against trees, and rocks, the head and the feet of the dead man thrown across the saddle. The limbs tore out his hair; the brow, beating the huge trunks, spattered them with blood; the spurs tore their ragged coats of bark. Suddenly the beast and the horseman issued from the forest and rushed into a valley, just as the moon appeared above the mountains. The valley here was stony, inclosed by enormous rocks.

François then uttered a yell of joy which the echoes repeated like a peal of thunder, and he leaped from his horse, his cutlass in his hand.

The beast, with bristling hair, the back arched, awaited him, its eyes gleaming like two stars. But, before beginning battle, the strong hunter, seizing his brother, seated him on a rock, and, placing stones under his head, which was no more than a mass of blood, he shouted in the ears as if he was talking to a deaf man: "Look, Jean; look at this!"

Then he attacked the monster. He felt himself strong enough to overturn a mountain, to bruise stones in his hands. The beast tried to bite him, aiming for his stomach; but he had seized the fierce animal by the neck, without even using his weapon, and he strangled it gently, listening to the cessation of breathing in its throat and the beatings of its heart. He laughed, wild with joy, pressing closer and closer his formidable embrace, crying in a delirium of joy, "Look, Jean, look!" All resistance ceased; the body of the wolf became limp. He was dead.

François took him up in his arms and carried him to the feet of the elder brother, where he laid him, repeating, in a tender voice: "There, there, there, my little Jean, see him!"

Then he replaced on the saddle the two bodies, one upon the other, and rode away.

He returned to the château, laughing and crying, like Gargantua at the birth of Pantagruel, uttering shouts of triumph, and boisterous with joy as he related the death of the beast, and grieving and tearing his beard in telling of that of his brother.

And often, later, when he talked again of that day, he would say, with tears in his eyes: "If only poor Jean could have seen me strangle the beast, he would have died content, that I am sure!"

The widow of my ancestor inspired her orphan son with that horror of the chase which has transmitted itself from father to son as far down as myself.

The Marquis d'Arville was silent. Some one asked:

"That story is a legend, isn't it?"

And the story teller answered:

"I swear to you that it is true from beginning to end."

Then a lady declared, in a little, soft voice:

"All the same, it is fine to have passions like that."

FAREWELL!

THE two friends were getting near the end of their dinner. Through the café windows they could see the Boulevard, crowded with people. They could feel the gentle breezes which are wafted over Paris on warm summer evenings and make you feel like going out somewhere, you care not where, under the trees, and make you dream of moonlit rivers, of fireflies and of larks.

One of the two, Henri Simon, heaved a deep sigh and said:

"Ah! I am growing old. It's sad. Formerly, on evenings like this, I felt full of life. Now, I only feel regrets. Life is short!"

He was perhaps forty-five years old, very bald and already growing stout.

The other, Pierre Carnier, a trifle older, but thin and lively, answered:

"Well, my boy, I have grown old without noticing it in the least. I have always been merry, healthy, vigorous and all the rest. As one sees oneself in the mirror every day, one does not realize the work of age, for it is slow, regular, and it modifies the countenance so gently that the changes are unnoticeable. It is for this reason alone that we do not die of sorrow after two or three years of excitement. For we cannot understand the alterations which time produces. In order to appreciate them

one would have to remain six months without seeing one's own face—then, oh, what a shock!

"And the women, my friend, how I pity the poor beings! All their joy, all their power, all their life, lies in their beauty, which lasts ten years.

"As I said, I aged without noticing it; I thought myself practically a youth, when I was almost fifty years old. Not feeling the slightest infirmity, I went about, happy and peaceful.

"The revelation of my decline came to me in a simple and terrible manner, which overwhelmed me for almost six months—then I became resigned.

"Like all men, I have often been in love, but most especially once.

"I met her at the seashore, at Étretat, about twelve years ago, shortly after the war. There is nothing prettier than this beach during the morning bathing-hour. It is small, shaped like a horseshoe, framed by high, while cliffs, which are pierced by strange holes called the 'Portes,' one stretching out into the ocean like the leg of a giant, the other short and dumpy. The women gather on the narrow strip of sand in this frame of high rocks, which they make into a gorgeous garden of beautiful gowns. The sun beats down on the shores, on the multicolored parasols, on the blue-green sea; and all is gay, delightful, smiling. You sit down at the edge of the water and you watch the bathers. The women come down, wrapped in long bath robes, which they throw off daintily when they reach the foamy edge of the rippling waves; and they run into the water with a rapid little step, stopping from time to time for a delightful little thrill from the cold water, a short gasp.

"Very few stand the test of the bath. It is there that they can be judged, from the ankle to the throat. Especially on leaving the water are the defects revealed, although water is a powerful aid to flabby skin.

"The first time that I saw this young woman in the water, I was delighted, entranced. She stood the test well. There are faces whose charms appeal to you at first glance and delight you instantly. You seem to have found the woman whom you were born to love. I had that feeling and that shock.

"I was introduced, and was soon smitten worse than I had ever been before. My heart longed for her. It is a terrible yet delightful thing thus to be dominated by a young woman. It is almost torture, and yet infinite delight. Her look, her smile, her hair fluttering in the wind, the little lines of her face, the slightest movement of her features, delighted me, upset me, entranced me. She had captured me, body and soul, by her gestures, her manners, even by her clothes, which seemed to take on a peculiar charm as soon as she wore them. I grew tender at the sight of her veil on some piece of furniture, her gloves thrown on a chair. Her gowns seemed to me inimitable. Nobody had hats like hers.

"She was married, but her husband came only on Saturday, and left on Monday. I didn't cencern myself about him, anyhow. I wasn't jealous of him, I don't know why; never did a creature seem to me to be of less importance in life, to attract my attention less than this man.

"But she! how I loved her! How beautiful, graceful and young she was! She was youth, elegance,

freshness itself! Never before had I felt so strongly what a pretty, distinguished, delicate, charming, graceful being woman is. Never before had I appreciated the seductive beauty to be found in the curve of a cheek, the movement of a lip, the pinkness of an ear, the shape of that foolish organ called the nose.

"This lasted three months; then I left for America, overwhelmed with sadness. But her memory remained in me, persistent, triumphant. From far away I was as much hers as I had been when she was near me. Years passed by, and I did not forget her. The charming image of her person was ever before my eyes and in my heart. And my love remained true to her, a quiet tenderness now, something like the beloved memory of the most beautiful and the most enchanting thing I had ever met in my life.

"Twelve years are not much in a lifetime! One does not feel them slip by. The years follow each other gently and quickly, slowly yet rapidly, each one is long and yet so soon over! They add up so rapidly, they leave so few traces behind them, they disappear so completely, that, when one turns round to look back over bygone years, one sees nothing and yet one does not understand how one happens to be so old. It seemed to me, really, that hardly a few months separated me from that charming season on the sands of Étretat.

"Last spring I went to dine with some friends at Maisons-Laffitte.

"Just as the train was leaving, a big, fat lady, escorted by four little girls, got into my car. I

hardly looked at this mother hen, very big, very round, with a face as full as the moon framed in an enormous, beribboned hat.

"She was puffing, out of breath from having been forced to walk quickly. The children began to chatter. I unfolded my paper and began to read.

"We had just passed Asnières, when my neighbor suddenly turned to me and said:

" 'Excuse me, sir, but are you not Monsieur Garnier?'

" 'Yes, madame.'

"Then she began to laugh, the pleased laugh of a good woman; and yet it was sad.

" 'You do not seem to recognize me.'

"I hesitated. It seemed to me that I had seen that face somewhere; but where? when? I answered:

" 'Yes—and no. I certainly know you, and yet I cannot recall your name.'

"She blushed a little:

" 'Madame Julie Lefèvre.'

"Never had I received such a shock. In a second it seemed to me as though it were all over with me! I felt that a veil had been torn from my eyes and that I was going to make a horrible and heart-rending discovery.

"So that was she! That big, fat, common woman, she! She had become the mother of these four girls since I had last her. And these little beings surprised me as much as their mother. They were part of her; they were big girls, and already had a place in life. Whereas she no longer counted, she, that marvel of dainty and charming gracefulness. It seemed to me that I had seen her but yesterday,

and this is how I found her again! Was it possible? A poignant grief seized my heart, and also a revolt against nature herself, an unreasoning indignation against this brutal, infamous act of destruction.

"I looked at her, bewildered. Then I took her hand in mine, and tears came to my eyes. I wept for her lost youth. For I did not know this fat lady.

"She was also excited, and stammered:

"'I am greatly changed, am I not? What can you expect—everything has its time! You see, I have become a mother, nothing but a good mother. Farewell to the rest, that is over. Oh! I never expected you to recognize me if we met. You, too, have changed. It took me quite a while to be sure that I was not mistaken. Your hair is all white. Just think! Twelve years ago! Twelve years! My oldest girl is already ten.'

"I looked at the child. And I recognized in her something of her mother's old charm, but something as yet unformed, something which promised for the future. And life seemed to me as swift as a passing train.

"We had reached Maisons-Laffitte. I kissed my old friend's hand. I had found nothing utter but the most commonplace remarks. I was too much upset to talk.

"At night, alone, at home, I stood in front of the mirror for a long time, a very long time. And I finally remembered what I had been, finally saw in my mind's eye my brown mustache, my black hair and the youthful expression of my face. Now I was old. Farewell!"

A VENDETTA

THE widow of Paolo Saverini lived alone with her son in a poor little house on the outskirts of Bonifacio. The town, built on an outjutting part of the mountain, in places even overhanging the sea, looks across the straits, full of sandbanks, towards the southernmost coast of Sardinia. Beneath it, on the other side and almost surrounding it, is a cleft in the cliff like an immense corridor which serves as a harbor, and along it the little Italian and Sardinian fishing boats come by a circuitous route between precipitous cliffs as far as the first houses, and every two weeks the old, wheezy steamer which makes the trip to Ajaccio.

On the white mountain the houses, massed together, makes an even whiter spot. They look like the nests of wild birds, clinging to this peak, overlooking this terrible passage, where vessels rarely venture. The wind, which blows uninterruptedly, has swept bare the forbidding coast; it drives through the narrow straits and lays waste both sides. The pale streaks of foam, clinging to the black rocks, whose countless peaks rise up out of the water, look like bits of rag floating and drifting on the surface of the sea.

The house of widow Saverini, clinging to the very edge of the precipice, looks out, through its three windows, over this wild and desolate picture.

She lived there alone, with her son Antonia and their dog "Sémillante," a big, thin beast, with a long rough coat, of the sheep-dog breed. The young man took her with him when out hunting.

One night, after some kind of a quarrel, Antoine Saverini was treacherously stabbed by Nicolas Ravolati, who escaped the same evening to Sardinia.

When the old mother received the body of her child, which the neighbors had brought back to her, she did not cry, but she stayed there for a long time motionless, watching him. Then, stretching her wrinkled hand over the body, she promised him a vendetta. She did not wish anybody near her, and she shut herself up beside the body with the dog, which howled continuously, standing at the foot of the bed, her head streached towards her master and her tail between her legs. She did not move any more than did the mother, who, now leaning over the body with a blank stare, was weeping silently and watching it.

The young man, lying on his back, dressed in his jacket of coarse cloth, torn at the chest, seemed to be asleep. But he had blood all over him; on his shirt, which had been torn off in order to administer the first aid; on his vest, on his trousers, on his face, on his hands. Clots of blood had hardened in his beard and in his hair.

His old mother began to talk to him. At the sound of this voice the dog quieted down.

"Never fear, my boy, my little baby, you shall be avenged. Sleep, sleep; you shall be avenged. Do you hear? It's your mother's promise! And she

always keeps her word, your mother does, you know she does."

Slowly she leaned over him, pressing her cold lips to his dead ones.

Then Sémillante began to howl again with a long, monotonous, penetrating, horrible howl.

The two of them, the woman and the dog, remained there until morning.

Antoine Saverini was buried the next day and soon his name ceased to be mentioned in Bonifacio.

He had neither brothers nor cousins. No man was there to carry on the vendetta. His mother, the old woman, alone pondered over it.

On the other side of the straits she saw, from morning until night, a little white speck on the coast. It was the little Sardinian village Longosardo, where Corsican criminals take refuge when they are too closely pursued. They compose almost the entire population of this hamlet, opposite their native island, awaiting the time to return, to go back to the "maquis." She knew that Nicolas Ravolati had sought refuge in this village.

All alone, all day long, seated at her window, she was looking over there and thinking of revenge. How could she do anything without help—she, an invalid and so near death? But she had promised, she had sworn on the body. She could not forget, she could not wait. What could she do? She no longer slept at night; she had neither rest nor peace of mind; she thought persistently. The dog, dozing at her feet, would sometimes lift her head and howl. Since her master's death she often howled thus, as though she were calling him, as though her

beast's soul, inconsolable too, had also retained a recollection that nothing could wipe out.

One night, as Sémillante began to howl, the mother suddenly got hold of an idea, a savage, vindictive, fierce idea. She thought it over until morning. Then, having arisen at daybreak, she went to church. She prayed, prostrate on the floor, begging the Lord to help her, to support her, to give to her poor, broken-down body the strength which she needed in order to avenge her son.

She returned home. In her yard she had an old barrel, which acted as a cistern. She turned it over, emptied it, made it fast to the ground with sticks and stones. Then she chained Sémillante to this improvised kennel and went into the house.

She walked ceaselessly now, her eyes always fixed on the distant coast of Sardinia. He was over there, the murderer.

All day and all night the dog howled. In the morning the old woman brought her some water in a bowl, but nothing more; no soup, no bread.

Another day went by. Sémillante, exhausted, was sleeping. The following day her eyes were shining, her hair on end and she was pulling wildly at her chain.

All this day the old woman gave her nothing to eat. The beast, furious, was barking hoarsely. Another night went by.

Then, at daybreak, Mother Saverini asked a neighbor for some straw. She took the old rags which had formerly been worn by her husband and stuffed them so as to make them look like a human body.

Having planted a stick in the ground, in front of

Sémillante's kennel, she tied to it this dummy, which seemed to be standing up. Then she made a head out of some old rags.

The dog, surprised, was watching this straw man, and was quiet, although famished. Then the old woman went to the store and bought a piece of black sausage. When she got home she started a fire in the yard, near the kennel, and cooked the sausage. Sémillante, frantic, was jumping about, frothing at the mouth, her eyes fixed on the food, the odor of which went right to her stomach.

Then the mother made of the smoking sausage a necktie for the dummy. She tied it very tight around the neck with string, and when she had finished she untied the dog.

With one leap the beast jumped at the dummy's throat, and with her paws on its shoulders she began to tear at it. She would fall back with a piece of food in her mouth, then would jump again, sinking her fangs into the string, and snatching few pieces of meat she would fall back again and once more spring forward. She was tearing up the face with her teeth and the whole neck was in tatters.

The old woman, motionless and silent, was watching eagerly. Then she chained the beast up again, made her fast for two more days and began this strange performance again.

For three months she accustomed her to this battle, to this meal conquered by a fight. She no longer chained her up, but just pointed to the dummy.

She had taught her to tear him up and to devour him without even leaving any traces in her throat.

Then, as a reward, she would give her a piece of sausage.

As soon as she saw the man, Sémillante would begin to tremble. Then she would look up to her mistress, who, lifting her finger, would cry, "Go!" in a shrill tone.

When she thought that the proper time had come, the widow went to confession and, one Sunday morning she partook of communion with an ecstatic fervor. Then, putting on men's clothes and looking like an old tramp, she struck a bargain with a Sardinian fisherman who carried her and her dog to the other side of the straits.

In a bag she had a large piece of sausage. Sémillante had had nothing to eat for two days. The old woman kept letting her smell the food and whetting her appetite.

They got to Longosardo. The Corsican woman walked with a limp. She went to a baker's shop and asked for Nicolas Ravolati. He had taken up his old trade, that of carpenter. He was working alone at the back of his store.

The old woman opened the door and called:

"Hallo, Nicolas!"

He turned around. Then releasing her dog, she cried:

"Go, go! Eat him up! eat him up!"

The maddened animal sprang for his throat. The man stretched out his arms, clasped the dog and rolled to the ground. For a few seconds he squirmed, beating the ground with his feet. Then he stopped moving, while Sémillante dug her fangs into his throat and tore it to ribbons. Two neigh-

bors, seated before their door, remembered perfectly having seen an old beggar come out with a thin, black dog which was eating something that its master was giving him.

At nightfall the old woman was at home again. She slept well that night.

AN ARTIFICE

THE old doctor sat by the fireside, talking to his fair patient who was lying on the lounge. There was nothing much the matter with her, except that she had one of those little feminine ailments from which pretty women frequently suffer—slight anæmia, a nervous attack, etc.

"No, doctor," she said; "I shall never be able to understand a woman deceiving her husband. Even allowing that she does not love him, that she pays no heed to her vows and promises, how can she give herself to another man? How can she conceal the intrigue from other people's eyes? How can it be possible to love amid lies and treason?"

The doctor smiled, and replied: "It is perfectly easy, and I can assure you that a woman does not think of all those little subtle details when she has mads up her mind to go astray.

"As for dissimulation, all women have plenty of it on hand for such occasions, and the simplest of them are wonderful, and extricate themselves from the greatest dilemmas in a remarkable manner."

The young woman, however, seemed incredulous.

"No, doctor," she said; "one never thinks until after it has happened of what one ought to have done in a critical situation, and women are certainly more liable than men to lose their head on such occasions."

The doctor raised his hands. "After it has happened, you say! Now I will tell you something that happened to one of my female patients, whom I always considered an immaculate woman.

"It happened in a provincial town, and one night when I was asleep, in that deep first sleep from which it is so difficult to rouse us, it seemed to me, in my dreams, as if the bells in the town were sounding a fire alarm, and I woke up with a start. It was my own bell, which was ringing wildly, and as my footman did not seem to be answering the door, I, in turn, pulled the bell at the head of my bed, and soon I heard a banging, and steps in the silent house, and Jean came into my room, and handed me a letter which said: 'Madame Lelièvre begs Dr. Siméon to come to her immediately.'

"I thought for a few moments, and then I said to myself: 'A nervous attack, vapors; nonsense, I am too tired.' And so I replied: 'As Dr. Siméon is not at all well, he must beg Madame Lelièvre to be kind enough to call in his colleague, Monsieur Bonnet.' I put the note into an envelope and went to sleep again, but about half an hour later the street bell rang again, and Jean came to me and said: 'There is somebody downstairs; I do not quite know whether it is a man or a woman, as the individual is so wrapped up, but they wish to speak to you immediately. They say it is a matter of life and death for two people.' Whereupon I sat up in bed and told him to show the person in.

"A kind of black phantom appeared and raised her veil as soon as Jean had left the room. It was Madame Berthe Lelièvre, quite a young woman, who had been married for three years to a large

merchant in the town, who was said to have married the prettiest girl in the neighborhood.

"She was terribly pale, her face was contracted as the faces of insane people are, occasionally, and her hands trembled violently. Twice she tried to speak without being able to utter a sound, but at last she stammered out: 'Come—quick—quick, doctor. Come—my—friend has just died in my bedroom.' She stopped, half suffocated with emotion, and then went on: 'My husband will—be coming home from the club very soon.'

"I jumped out of bed without even considering that I was only in my nightshirt, and dressed myself in a few moments, and then I said: 'Did you come a short time ago?' 'No,' she said, standing like a statue petrified with horror. 'It was my servant—she knows.' And then, after a short silence, she went on: 'I was there—by his side.' And she uttered a sort of cry of horror, and after a fit of choking, which made her gasp, she wept violently, and shook with spasmodic sobs for a minute or two. Then her tears suddenly ceased, as if by an internal fire, and with an air of tragic calmness, she said: 'Let us make haste.'

"I was ready, but exclaimed: 'I quite forgot to order my carriage.' 'I have one,' she said; 'it is his, which was waiting for him!' She wrapped herself up, so as to completely conceal her face, and we started.

"When she was by my side in the carriage she suddenly seized my hand, and crushing it in her delicate fingers, she said, with a shaking voice, that proceeded from a distracted heart: 'Oh! if you only knew, if you only knew what I am suffering! I loved him, I have loved him distractedly, like a

madwoman, for the last six months.' 'Is any one up in your house?' I asked. 'No, nobody except Rose, who knows everything.'

"We stopped at the door, and evidently everybody was asleep. We went in without making any noise, by means of her latch-key, and walked upstairs on tiptoe. The frightened servant was sitting on the top of the stairs with a lighted candle by her side, as she was afraid to remain with the dead man, and I went into the room, which was in great disorder. Wet towels, with which they had bathed the young man's temples, were lying on the floor, by the side of a washbasin and a glass, while a strong smell of vinegar pervaded the room.

"The dead man's body was lying at full length in the middle of the room, and I went up to it, looked at it, and touched it. I opened the eyes and felt the hands, and then, turning to the two women, who were shaking as if they were freezing, I said to them: 'Help me to lift him on to the bed.' When we had laid him gently on it, I listened to his heart and put a looking-glass to his lips, and then said: 'It is all over.' It was a terrible sight!

"I looked at the man, and said: 'You ought to arrange his hair a little.' The girl went and brought her mistress' comb and brush, but as she was trembling, and pulling out his long, matted hair in doing it, Madame Lelièvre took the comb out of her hand, and arranged his hair as if she were caressing him. She parted it, brushed his beard, rolled his mustaches gently round her fingers, then, suddenly, letting go of his hair, she took the dead man's inert head in her hands and looked for a long time in despair at the dead face, which no longer could

smile at her, and then, throwing herself on him, she clasped him in her arms and kissed him ardently. Her kisses fell like blows on his closed mouth and eyes, his forehead and temples; and then, putting her lips to his ear, as if he could still hear her, and as if she were about to whisper something to him, she said several times, in a heartrending voice: 'Good-by, my darling!'

"Just then the clock struck twelve, and I started up. 'Twelve o'clock!' I exclaimed. 'That is the time when the club closes. Come, madame, we have not a moment to lose!' She started up, and I said: 'We must carry him into the drawing-room.' And when we had done this, I placed him on a sofa, and lit the chandeliers, and just then the front door was opened and shut noisily. 'Rose, bring me the basin and the towels, and make the room look tidy. Make haste, for Heaven's sake! Monsieur Lelièvre is coming in.'

"I heard his steps on the stairs, and then his hands feeling along the walls. 'Come here, my dear fellow,' I said; 'we have had an accident.'

"And the astonished husband appeared in the door with a cigar in his mouth, and said: 'What is the matter? What is the meaning of this?' 'My dear friend,' I said, going up to him, 'you find us in great embarrassment. I had remained late, chatting with your wife and our friend, who had brought me in his carriage, when he suddenly fainted, and in spite of all we have done, he has remained unconscious for two hours. I did not like to call in strangers, and if you will now help me downstairs with him, I shall be able to attend to him better at his own house.'

"The husband, who was surprised, but quite unsuspicious, took off his hat, and then he took his rival, who would be quite inoffensive for the future, under the arms. I got between his two legs, as if I had been a horse between the shafts, and we went downstairs, while his wife held a light for us. When we got outside I stood the body up, so as to deceive the coachman, and said: 'Come, my friend; it is nothing; you feel better already, I expect. Pluck up your courage, and make an effort. It will soon be over.' But as I felt that he was slipping out of my hands, I gave him a slap on the shoulder, which sent him forward and made him fall into the carriage, and then I got in after him. Monsieur Lelièvre, who was rather alarmed, said to me: 'Do you think it is anything serious?' To which I replied: 'No,' with a smile, as I looked at his wife, who had put her arm into that of her husband, and was trying to see into the carriage.

"I shook hands with them and told my coachman to start, and during the whole drive the dead man kept falling against me. When we got to his house I said that he had become unconscious on the way home, and helped to carry him upstairs, where I certified that he was dead, and acted another comedy to his distracted family, and at last I got back to bed, not without swearing at lovers."

The doctor ceased, though he was still smiling, and the young woman, who was in a very nervous state, said: "Why have you told me that terrible story?"

He gave her a gallant bow, and replied:

"So that I may offer you my services if they should be needed."

DREAMS

THEY had just dined together, five old friends, a writer, a doctor and three rich bachelors without any profession.

They had talked about everything, and a feeling of lassitude came over them, that feeling which precedes and leads to the departure of guests after festive gatherings. One of those present, who had for the last five minutes been gazing silently at the surging boulevard dotted with gas-lamps, with its rattling vehicles, said suddenly:

"When you've nothing to do from morning till night, the days are long."

"And the nights too," assented the guest who sat next to him. "I sleep very little; pleasures fatigue me; conversation is monotonous. Never do I come across a new idea, and I feel, before talking to any one, a violent longing to say nothing and to listen to nothing. I don't know what to do with my evenings."

The third idler remarked:

"I would pay a great deal for anything that would help me to pass just two pleasant hours every day."

The writer, who had just thrown his overcoat across his arm, turned round to them, and said:

"The man who could discover a new vice and introduce it among his fellow creatures, even if it were to shorten their lives, would render a greater

service to humanity than the man who found the means of securing to them eternal salvation and eternal youth."

The doctor burst out laughing, and, while he chewed his cigar, he said:

"Yes, but it is not so easy to discover it. Men have, however crudely, been seeking for and working for the object you refer to since the beginning of the world. The men who came first reached perfection at once in this way. We are hardly equal to them."

One of the three idlers murmured:

"What a pity!"

Then, after a minute's pause, he added:

"If we could only sleep, sleep well, without feeling hot or cold, sleep with that perfect unconsciousness we experience on nights when we are thoroughly fatigued, sleep without dreams."

"Why without dreams?" asked the guest sitting next to him.

The other replied:

"Because dreams are not always pleasant; they are always fantastic, improbable, disconnected; and because when we are asleep we cannot have the sort of dreams we like. We ought to dream waking."

"And what's to prevent you?" asked the writer.

The doctor flung away the end of his cigar.

"My dear fellow, in order to dream when you are awake, you need great power and great exercise of will, and when you try to do it, great weariness is the result. Now, real dreaming, that journey of our thoughts through delightful visions, is assuredly the sweetest experience in the world; but it must come naturally, it must not be provoked

in a painful manner, and must be accompanied by absolute bodily comfort. This power of dreaming I can give you, provided you promise that you will not abuse it."

The writer shrugged his shoulders:

"Ah! yes, I know—hasheesh, opium, green tea—artificial paradises. I have read Baudelaire, and I even tasted the famous drug, which made me very sick."

But the doctor, without stirring from his seat, said:

"No; ether, nothing but ether; and I would suggest that you literary men should use it sometimes."

The three rich bachelors drew closer to the doctor.

One of them said:

"Explain to us the effects of it."

And the doctor replied:

"Let us put aside big words, shall we not? I am not talking of medicine or morality; I am talking of pleasure. You give yourselves up every day to excesses which consume your lives. I want to indicate to you a new sensation, possible only to intelligent men—let us say even very intelligent men—dangerous, like everything else that overexcites our organs, but exquisite. I might add that you would require a certain preparation, that is to say, practice, to feel in all their completeness the singular effects of ether.

"They are different from the effects of hasheesh, of opium, or morphia, and they cease as soon as the absorption of the drug is interrupted, while the other generators of day dreams continue their action for hours.

"I am now going to try to analyze these feelings as clearly as possible. But the thing is not easy, so facile, so delicate, so almost imperceptible, are these sensations.

"It was when I was attacked by violent neuralgia that I made use of this remedy, which since then I have, perhaps, slightly abused.

"I had acute pains in my head and neck, and an intolerable heat of the skin, a feverish restlessness. I took up a large bottle of ether, and, lying down, I began to inhale it slowly.

"At the end of some minutes I thought I heard a vague murmur, which ere long became a sort of humming, and it seemed to me that all the interior of my body had become light, light as air, that it was dissolving into vapor.

"Then came a sort of torpor, a sleepy sensation of comfort, in spite of the pains which still continued, but which had ceased to make themselves felt. It was one of those sensations which we are willing to endure and not any of those frightful wrenches against which our tortured body protests.

"Soon the strange and delightful sense of emptiness which I felt in my chest extended to my limbs, which, in their turn, became light, as light as if the flesh and the bones had been melted and the skin only were left, the skin necessary to enable me to realize the sweetness of living, of bathing in this sensation of well-being. Then I perceived that I was no longer suffering. The pain had gone, melted away, evaporated. And I heard voices, four voices, two dialogues, without understanding what was said. At one time there were only indistinct sounds, at

another time a word reached my ear. But I recognized that this was only the humming I had heard before, but emphasized. I was not asleep; I was not awake; I comprehended, I felt, I reasoned with the utmost clearness and depth, with extraordinary energy and intellectual pleasure, with a singular intoxication arising from this separation of my mental faculties.

"It was not like the dreams caused by hasheesh or the somewhat sickly visions that come from opium; it was an amazing acuteness of reasoning, a new way of seeing, judging and appreciating the things of life, and with the certainty, the absolute consciousness that this was the true way.

"And the old image of the Scriptures suddenly came back to my mind. It seemed to me that I had tasted of the Tree of Knowledge, that all the mysteries were unveiled, so much did I find myself under the sway of a new, strange and irrefutable logic. And arguments, reasonings, proofs rose up in a heap before my brain only to be immediately displaced by some stronger proof, reasoning, argument. My head had, in fact, become a battleground of ideas. I was a superior being, armed with invincible intelligence, and I experienced a huge delight at the manifestation of my power.

It lasted a long, long time. I still kept inhaling the ether from my flagon. Suddenly I perceived that it was empty."

The four men exclaimed at the same time:

"Doctor, a prescription at once for a liter of ether!"

But the doctor, putting on his hat, replied:

"As to that, certainly not; go and let some one else poison you!"

And he left them.

Ladies and gentlemen, what is your opinion on the subject?

THE SNIPE

OLD Baron des Ravots had for forty years been the champion sportsman of his province. But a stroke of paralysis had kept him in his chair for the last five or six years. He could now only shoot pigeons from the window of his drawing-room or from the top of his high doorsteps.

He spent his time in reading.

He was a good-natured business man, who had much of the literary spirit of a former century. He worshipped anecdotes, those little risqué anecdotes, and also true stories of events that happened in his neighborhood. As soon as a friend came to see him he asked:

"Well, anything new?"

And he knew how to worm out information like an examining lawyer.

On sunny days he had his large reclining chair, similar to a bed, wheeled to the hall door. A man servant behind him held his guns, loaded them and handed them to his master. Another valet, hidden in the bushes, let fly a pigeon from time to time at irregular intervals, so that the baron should be unprepared and be always on the watch.

And from morning till night he fired at the birds, much annoyed if he were taken by surprise and laughing till he cried when the animal fell straight to the earth or turned over in some comical and un-

expected manner. He would turn to the man who was loading the gun and say, almost choking with laughter:

"Did that get him, Joseph? Did you see how he fell?" Joseph invariably replied:

"Oh, monsieur le baron never misses them."

In autumn, when the shooting season opened, he invited his friends as he had done formerly, and loved to hear them firing in the distance. He counted the shots and was pleased when they followed each other rapidly. And in the evening he made each guest give a faithful account of his day. They remained three hours at table telling about their sport.

They were strange and improbable adventures in which the romancing spirit of the sportsmen delighted. Some of them were memorable stories and were repeated regularly. The story of a rabbit that little Vicomte de Bourril had missed in his vestibule convulsed them with laughter each year anew. Every five minutes a fresh speaker would say:

"I heard 'birr! birr!' and a magnificent covey rose at ten paces from me. I aimed. Pif! paf! and I saw a shower, a veritable shower of birds. There were seven of them!"

And they all went into raptures, amazed, but reciprocally credulous.

But there was an old custom in the house called "The Story of the Snipe."

Whenever this queen of birds was in season the same ceremony took place at each dinner. As they worshipped this incomparable bird, each guest ate one every evening, but the heads were all left in the dish.

Then the baron, acting the part of a bishop, had

a plate brought to him containing a little fat, and he carefully anointed the precious heads, holding them by the tip of their slender, needle-like beak. A lighted candle was placed beside him and everyone was silent in an anxiety of expectation.

Then he took one of the heads thus prepared, stuck a pin through it and stuck the pin on a cork, keeping the whole contrivance steady by means of little crossed sticks, and carefully placed this object on the neck of a bottle in the manner of a tourniquet.

All the guests counted simultaneously in a loud tone:

"One—two—three."

And the baron with a fillip of the finger made this toy whirl round.

The guest to whom the long beak pointed when the head stopped became the possessor of all the heads, a feast fit for a king, which made his neighbors look askance.

He took them one by one and toasted them over the candle. The grease sputtered, the roasting flesh smoked and the lucky winner ate the head, holding it by the beak and uttering exclamations of enjoyment.

And at each head the diners, raising their glasses, drank to his health.

When he had finished the last head he was obliged, at the baron's orders, to tell an anecdote to compensate the disappointed ones.

Here are some of the stories.

THE WILL

I KNEW that tall young fellow, René de Bourneval. He was an agreeable man, though rather melancholy and seemed prejudiced against everything, was very skeptical, and he could with a word tear down social hypocrisy. He would often say:

"There are no honorable men, or, at least, they are only relatively so when compared with those lower than themselves."

He had two brothers, whom he never saw, the Messieurs de Courcils. I always supposed they were by another father, on account of the difference in the name. I had frequently heard that the family had a strange history, but did not know the details. As I took a great liking to René we soon became intimate friends, and one evening, when I had been dining with him alone, I asked him by chance: "Are you a son of the first or second marriage?" He grew rather pale, and then flushed, and did not speak for a few moments; he was visibly embarrassed. Then he smiled in the melancholy, gentle manner, which was peculiar to him, and said:

"My dear friend, if it will not weary you, I can give you some very strange particulars about my life. I know that you are a sensible man, so I do not fear that our friendship will suffer by my

revelations; and should it suffer, I should not care about having you for my friend any longer.

"My mother, Madame de Courcils, was a poor little, timid woman, whom her husband had married for the sake of her fortune, and her whole life was one of martyrdom. Of a loving, timid, sensitive disposition, she was constantly being ill-treated by the man who ought to have been my father, one of those boors called country gentlemen. A month after their marriage he was living a licentious life and carrying on liaisons with the wives and daughters of his tenants. This did not prevent him from having three children by his wife, that is, if you count me in. My mother said nothing, and lived in that noisy house like a little mouse. Set aside, unnoticed, nervous, she looked at people with her bright, uneasy, restless eyes, the eyes of some terrified creature which can never shake off its fear. And yet she was pretty, very pretty and fair, a pale blonde, as if her hair had lost its color through her constant fear.

"Among the friends of Monsieur de Courcils who constantly came to her château, there was an ex-cavalry officer, a widower, a man who was feared, who was at the same time tender and violent, capable of the most determined resolves, Monsieur de Bourneval, whose name I bear. He was a tall, thin man, with a heavy black mustache. I am very like him. He was a man who had read a great deal, and his ideas were not like those of most of hiss class. His great-grandmother had been a friend of J. J. Rousseau's, and one might have said that he had inherited something of this ancestral connection. He knew the *Contrat Social,* and the *Nouvelle Héloise*

by heart, and all those philosophical books which prepared in advance the overthrow of our old usages, prejudices, superannuated laws and imbecile morality.

"It seems that he loved my mother, and she loved him, but their liaison was carried on so secretly that no one guessed at its existence. The poor, neglected, unhappy woman must have clung to him in despair, and in her intimacy with him must have imbibed all his ways of thinking, theories of free thought, audacious ideas of independent love; but being so timid she never ventured to speak out, and it was all driven back, condensed, shut up in her heart.

"My two brothers were very hard towards her, like their father, and never gave her a caress, and, accustomed to seeing her count for nothing in the house, they treated her rather like a servant. I was the only one of her sons who really loved her and whom she loved.

"When she died I was seventeen, and I must add, in order that you may understand what follows, that a lawsuit between my father and mother had been decided in my mother's favor, giving her the bulk of the property, and, thanks to the tricks of the law, and the intelligent devotion of a lawyer to her interests, the right to make her will in favor of whom she pleased.

"We were told that there was a will at the lawyer's office and were invited to be present at the reading of it. I can remember it, as if it were yesterday. It was an imposing scene, dramatic, burlesque and surprising, occasioned by the posthumous revolt of that dead woman, by the cry for liberty, by the demands of that martyred one who had been

crushed by our oppression during her lifetime and who, from her closed tomb, uttered a despairing appeal for independence.

"The man who believed he was my father, a stout, ruddy-faced man, who looked like a butcher, and my brothers, two great fellows of twenty and twenty-two, were waiting quietly in their chanrs. Monsieur de Bourneval, who had been invited to be present, came in and stood behind me. He was very pale and bit his mustache, which was turning gray. No doubt he was prepared for what was going to happen. The lawyer double-locked the door and began to read the will, after having opened, in our presence, the envelope, sealed with red wax, of the contents of which he was ignorant."

My friend stopped talking abruptly, and rising, took from his writing-table an old paper, unfolded it, kissed it and then continued: "This is the will of my beloved mother:

"'I, the undersigned, Anne Catherine-Geneviéve-Mathilde de Croixluce, the legitimate wife of Léopold-Joseph Gontran de Courcils, sound in body and mind, here express my last wishes.

"'I first of all ask God, and then my dear son René to pardon me for the act I am about to commit. I believe that my child's heart is great enough to understand me, and to forgive me. I have suffered my whole life long. I was married out of calculation, then despised, misunderstood, oppressed and constantly deceived by my husband.

"'I forgive him, but I owe him nothing.

"'My elder sons never loved me, never petted me, scarcely treated me as a mother, but during my whole life I did my duty towards them, and I owe them nothing more after my death. The ties of blood cannot exist without daily and constant affection. An ungrateful son is less than a stranger; he is a culprit, for he has no right to be indifferent towards his mother.

"'I have always trembled before men, before their unjust laws, their inhuman customs, their shameful prejudices. Before God, I have no longer any fear. Dead, I fling aside disgraceful hypocrisy; I dare to speak my thoughts, and to avow and to sign the secret of my heart.

"'I therefore leave that part of my fortune of which the law allows me to dispose, in trust to my dear lover, Pierre-Germer-

Simon de Bourneval, to revert afterwards to our dear son René.

"'(This bequest is specified more precisely in a deed drawn up by a notary.)

"'And I declare before the Supreme Judge who hears me, that I should have cursed heaven and my own existence, if I had not found the deep, devoted, tender, unshaken affection of my lover; if I had not felt in his arms that the Creator made His creatures to love, sustain and console each other, and to weep together in the hours of sadness.

"'Monsieur de Courcils is the father of my two eldest sons; René, alone, owes his life to Monsieur de Bourneval. I pray the Master of men and of their destinies, to place father and son above social prejudices, to make them love each other until they die, and to love me also in my coffin.

"'These are my last thoughts, and my last wish.

"'MATHILDE DE CROIXLUCE.'

"Monsieur de Courcils had risen and he cried:

"'It is the will of a madwoman.'

"Then Monsieur de Bourneval stepped forward and said in a loud, penetrating voice: 'I, Simon de Bourneval, solemnly declare that this writing contains nothing but the strict truth, and I am ready to prove it by letters which I possess.'

"On hearing that, Monsieur de Courcils went up to him, and I thought that they were going to attack each other. There they stood, both of them tall, one stout and the other thin, both trembling. My mother's husband stammered out: 'You are a worthless wretch!' And the other replied in a loud, dry voice: 'We will meet elsewhere, monsieur. I should have already slapped your ugly face and challenged you long since if I had not, before everything else, thought of the peace of mind during her lifetime of that poor woman whom you caused to suffer so greatly.'

"Then, turning to me, he said: 'You are my son; will you come with me? I have no right to take you away, but I shall assume it, if you are willing to come with me.' I shook his hand without replying,

and we went out together. I was certainly three parts mad.

"Two days later Monsieur de Bourneval killed Monsieur de Courcils in a duel. My brothers, to avoid a terrible scandal, held their tongues. I offered them and they accepted half the fortune which my mother had left me. I took my real father's name, renouncing that which the law gave me, but which was not really mine. Monsieur de Bourneval died three years later and I am stil inconsolable."

He rose from his chair, walked up and down the room, and, standing in front of me, said:

"Well, I say that my mother's will was one of the most beautiful, the most loyal, as well as one of the grandest acts that a woman could perform. Do you not think so?"

I held out both hands to him, saying:

"I most certainly do, my friend."

WALTER SCHNAFFS' ADVENTURE

EVER since he entered France with the invading army Walter Schnaffs had considered himself the most unfortunate of men. He was large, had difficulty in walking, was short of breath and suffered frightfully with his feet, which were very flat and very fat. But he was a peaceful, benevolent man, not warlike or sanguinary, the father of four children whom he adored, and married to a little blonde whose little tendernesses, attentions and kisses he recalled with despair every evening. He liked to rise late and retire early, to eat good things in a leisurely manner and to drink beer in the saloon. He reflected, besides, that all that is sweet in existence vanishes with life, and he maintained in his heart a fearful hatred, instinctive as well as logical, for cannon, rifles, revolvers and swords, but especially for bayonets, feeling that he was unable to dodge this dangerous weapon rapidly enough to protect his big paunch.

And when night fell and he lay on the ground, wrapped in his cape beside his comrades who were snoring, he thought long and deeply about those he had left behind and of the dangers in his path. "If he were killed what would become of the little ones? Who would provide for them and bring them up?" Just at present they were not rich, although he had borrowed when he left so as to leave them some

money. And Walter Schnaffs wept when he thought of all this.

At the beginning of a battle his legs became so weak that he would have fallen if he had not reflected that the entire army would pass over his body. The whistling of the bullets gave him gooseflesh.

For months he had lived thus in terror and anguish.

His company was marching on Normandy, and one day he was sent to reconnoitre with a small detachment, simply to explore a portion of the territory and to return at once. All seemed quiet in the country; nothing indicated an armed resistance.

But as the Prussians were quietly descending into a little valley traversed by deep ravines a sharp fusillade made them halt suddenly, killing twenty of their men, and a company of sharpshooters, suddenly emerging from a little wood as large as your hand, darted forward with bayonets at the end of their rifles.

Walter Schnaffs remained motionless at first, so surprised and bewildered that he did not even think of making his escape. Then he was seized with a wild desire to run away, but he remembered at once that he ran like a tortoise compared with those thin Frenchmen, who came bounding along like a lot of goats. Perceiving a large ditch full of brushwood covered with dead leaves about six paces in front of him, he sprang into it with both feet together, without stopping to think of its depth, just as one jumps from a bridge into the river.

He fell like an arrow through a thick layer of vines and thorny brambles that tore his face and

hands and landed heavily in a sitting posture on a bed of stones. Raising his eyes, he saw the sky through the hole he had made in falling through. This aperture might betray him, and he crawled along carefully on hands and knees at the bottom of this ditch beneath the covering of interlacing branches, going as fast as he could and getting away from the scene of the skirmish. Presently he stopped and sat down, crouched like a hare amid the tall dry grass.

He heard firing and cries and groans going on for some time. Then the noise of fighting grew fainter and ceased. All was quiet and silent.

Suddenly something stirred beside him. He was frightfully startled. It was a little bird which had perched on a branch and was moving the dead leaves. For almost an hour Walter Schnaffs' heart beat loud and rapidly.

Night fell, filling the ravine with its shadows. The soldier began to think. What was he to do? What was to become of him? Should he rejoin the army? But how? By what road? And he began over again the horrible life of anguish, of terror, of fatigue and suffering that he had led since the commencement of the war. No! He no longer had the courage! He would not have the energy necessary to endure long marches and to face the dangers to which one was exposed at every moment.

But what should he do? He could not stay in this ravine in concealment until the end of hostilities. No, indeed! If it were not for having to eat, this prospect would not have daunted him greatly. But he had to eat, to eat every day.

And here he was, alone, armed and in uniform, on

the enemy's territory, far from those who would protect him. A shiver ran over him.

All at once he thought: "If I were only a prisoner!" And his heart quivered with a longing, an intense desire to be taken prisoner by the French. A prisoner, he would be saved, fed, housed, sheltered from bullets and swords, without any apprehension whatever, in a good, well-kept prison. A prisoner! What a dream!

His resolution was formed at once.

"I will constitute myself a prisoner."

He rose, determined to put this plan into execution without a moment's delay. But he stood motionless, suddenly a prey to disturbing reflections and fresh terrors.

Where would he make himself a prisoner and how? In what direction? And frightful pictures, pictures of death came into his mind.

He would run terrible danger in venturing alone through the country with his pointed helmet.

Supposing he should meet some peasants. These peasants seeing a Prussian who had lost his way, an unprotected Prussian, would kill him as if he were a stray dog! They would murder him with their forks, their picks, their scythes and their shovels. They would make a stew of him, a pie, with the frenzy of exasperated, conquered enemies.

If he should meet the sharpshooters! These sharpshooters, madmen without law or discipline, would shoot him just for amusement to pass an hour; it would make them laugh to see his head. And he fancied he was already leaning against a wall in front of four rifles whose little black apertures seemed to be gazing at him.

Supposing he should meet the French army itself The vanguard would take him for a scout, for some bold and sly trooper who had set off alone to reconnoitre, and they would fire at him. And he could already hear, in imagination, the irrgular shots of soldiers lying in the brush, while he himself, standing in the middle of the field, was sinking to the earth, riddled like a sieve with bullets which he felt piercing his flesh.

He sat down again in despair. His situation seemed hopeless.

It was quite a dark, black and silent night. He no longer budged, trembling at all the slight and unfamiliar sounds that occur at night. The sound of a rabbit crouching at the edge of his burrow almost made him run. The cry of an owl caused him positive anguish, giving him a nervous shock that pained like a wound. He opened his big eyes as wide as possible to try and see through the darkness, and he imagined every moment that he heard someone walking close beside him.

After interminable hours in which he suffered the tortures of the damned, he noticed through his leafy cover that the sky was becoming bright. He at once felt an intense relief. His limbs stretched out, suddenly relaxed, his heart quieted down, his eyes closed; he fell asleep.

When he awoke the sun appeared to be almost at the meridian. It must be noon. No sound disturbed the gloomy silence. Walter Schnaffs noticed that he was exceedingly hungry.

He yawned, his mouth watering at the thought of sausage, the good sausage the soldiers have, and he felt a gnawing at his stomach.

He rose from the ground, walked a few steps, found that his legs were weak and sat down to reflect. For two or three hours he again considered the pros and cons, changing his mind every moment, baffled, unhappy, torn by the most conflicting motives.

Finally he had an idea that seemed logical and practical. It was to watch for a villager passing by alone, unarmed and with no dangerous tools of his trade, and to run to him and give himself up, making him understand that he was surrendering.

He took off his helmet, the point of which might betray him, and put his head out of his hiding place with the utmost caution.

No solitary pedestrian could be perceived on the horizon. Yonder, to the right, smoke rose from the chimney of a little village, smoke from kitchen fires! And yonder, to the left, he saw at the end of an avenue of trees a large turreted château. He waited till evening, suffering frightfully from hunger, seeing nothing but flights of crows, hearing nothing but the silent expostulation of his empty stomach.

And darkness once more fell on him.

He stretched himself out in his retreat and slept a feverish sleep, haunted by nightmares, the sleep of a starving man.

Dawn again broke above his head and he began to take his observations. But the landscape was deserted as on the previous day, and a new fear came into Walted Schnaffs' mind—the fear of death by hunger! He pictured himself lying at full length on his back at the bottom of his hiding place, with his two eyes closed, and animals, little creatures of all

kinds, approached and began to feed on his dead body, attacking it all over at once, gliding beneath his clothing to bite his cold flesh, and a big crow pecked out his eyes with its sharp beak.

He almost became crazy, thinking he was going to faint and would not be able to walk. And he was just preparing to rush off to the village, determined to dare anything, to brave everything, when he perceived three peasants walking to the fields with their forks across their shoulders, and he dived back into his hiding place.

But as soon as it grew dark he slowly emerged from the ditch and started off, stooping and fearful, with beating heart, towards the distant château, preferring to go there rather than to the village, which seemed to him as formidable as a den of tigers.

The lower windows were brilliantly lighted. One of them was open and from it escaped a strong odor of roast meat, an odor which suddenly penetrated to the olfactories and to the stomach of Walter Schnaffs, tickling his nerves, making him breathe quickly, attracting him irresistibly and inspiring his heart with the boldness of desperation.

And abruptly, without reflection, he placed himself, helmet on head, in front of the window.

Eight servants were at dinner around a large table. But suddenly one of the maids sat there, her mouth agape, her eyes fixed and letting fall her glass. They all followed the direction of her gaze.

They saw the enemy!

Good God! The Prussians were attacking the château!

There was a shriek, only one shriek made up of eight shrieks uttered in eight different keys, a terrific

screaming of terror, then a tumultuous rising from their seats, a jostling, a scrimmage and a wild rush to the door at the farther end. Chairs fell over, the men knocked the women down and walked over them. In two seconds the room was empty, deserted, and the table, covered with eatables, stood in front of Walter Schnaffs, lost in amazement and still standing at the window.

After some moments of hesitation he climbed in at the window and approached the table. His fierce hunger caused him to tremble as if he were in a fever, but fear still held him back, numbed him. He listened. The entire house seemed to shudder. Doors closed, quick steps ran along the floor above. The uneasy Prussian listened eagerly to these confused sounds. Then he heard dull sounds, as though bodies were falling to the ground at the foot of the walls, human beings jumping from the first floor.

Then all motion, all disturbance ceased, and the great château became as silent as the grave.

Walter Schnaffs sat down before a clean plate and began to eat. He took great mouthfuls, as if he feared he might be interrupted before he had swallowed enough. He shovelled the food into his mouth, open like a trap, with both hands, and chunks of food went into his stomach, swelling out his throat as it passed down. Now and then he stopped, almost ready to burst like a stopped-up pipe. Then he would take the cider jug and wash down his œsophagus as one washes out a clogged rain pipe.

He emptied all the plates, all the dishes and all the bottles. Then, intoxicated with drink and food, besotted, red in the face, shaken by hiccoughs, his mind clouded and his speech thick, he unbuttoned

his uniform in order to breathe or he could not have taken a step. His eyes closed, his mind became torpid; he leaned his heavy forehead on his folded arms on the table and gradually lost all consciousness of things and events.

The last quarter of the moon above the trees in the park shed a faint light on the landscape. It was the chill hour that precedes the dawn.

Numerous silent shadows glided among the trees and occasionally a blade of steel gleamed in the shadow as a ray of moonlight struck it.

The quiet château stood there in dark outline. Only two windows were still lighted up on the ground floor.

Suddenly a voice thundered:

"Forward! nom d'un nom! To the breach, my lads!"

And in an instant the doors, shutters and window panes fell in beneath a wave of men who rushed in, breaking, destroying everything, and took the house by storm. In a moment fifty soldiers, armed to the teeth, bounded into the kitchen, where Walter Schnaffs was peacefully sleeping, and placing to his breast fifty loaded rifles, they overturned him, rolled him on the floor, seized him and tied his head and feet together.

He gasped in amazement, too besotted to understand, perplexed, bruised and wild with fear.

Suddenly a big soldier, covered with gold lace, put his foot on his stomach, shouting:

"You are my prisoner. Surrender!"

The Prussian heard only the one word "prisoner" and he sighed, "Ya, ya, ya."

He was raised from the floor, tied in a chair and

examined with lively curiosity by his victors, who were blowing like whales. Several of them sat down, done up with excitement and fatigue.

He smiled, actually smiled, secure now that he was at last a prisoner.

Another officer came into the room and said:

"Colonel, the enemy has escaped; several seem to have been wounded. We are in possession."

The big officer, who was wiping his forehead, exclaimed: "Victory!"

And he wrote in a little business memorandum book which he took from his pocket:

"After a desperate encounter the Prussians were obliged to beat a retreat, carrying with them their dead and wounded, the number of whom is estimated at fifty men. Several were taken prisoners."

The young officer inquired:

"What steps shall I take, colonel?"

"We will retire in good order," replied the colonel, "to avoid having to return and make another attack with artillery and a larger force of men."

And he gave the command to set out.

The column drew up in line in the darkness beneath the walls of the château and filed out, a guard of six soldiers with revolvers in their hands surrounding Walter Schnaffs, who was firmly bound.

Scouts were sent ahead to reconnoitre. They advanced cautiously, halting from time to time.

At daybreak they arrived at the district of La Roche-Oysel, whose national guard had accomplished this feat of arms.

The uneasy and excited inhabitants were expecting them. When they saw the prisoner's helmet tremendous shouts arose. The women raised their

arms in wonder, the old people wept. An old grandfather threw his crutch at the Prussian and struck the nose of one of their own defenders.

The colonel roared:

"See that the prisoner is secure!"

At length they reached the town hall. The prison was opened and Walter Schnaffs, freed from his bonds, cast into it. Two hundred armed men mounted guard outside the building.

Then, in spite of the indigestion that had been troubling him for some time, the Prussian, wild with joy, began to dance about, to dance frantically, throwing out his arms and legs and uttering wild shouts until he fell down exhausted beside the wall.

He was a prisoner—saved!

That was how the Château de Champignet was taken from the enemy after only six hours of occupation.

Colonel Ratier, a cloth merchant, who had led the assault at the head of a body of the national guard of La Roche-Oysel, was decorated with an order.

AT SEA

THE following paragraphs recently appeared in the papers:

"Boulogne-Sur-Mer, January 22.—Our correspondent writes:

"A fearful accident has thrown our sea-faring population, which has suffered so much in the last two years, into the greatest consternation. The fishing smack commanded by Captain Javel, on entering the harbor was wrecked on the rocks of the harbor breakwater.

"In spite of the efforts of the life boat and the shooting of life lines from the shore four sailors and the cabin boy were lost.

"The rough weather continues. Fresh disasters are anticipated."

Who is this Captain Javel? Is he the brother of the one-armed man?

If the poor man tossed about in the waves and dead, perhaps, beneath his wrecked boat, is the one I am thinking of, he took part, just eighteen years ago, in another tragedy, terrible and simple as are all these fearful tragedies of the sea.

Javel, senior, was then master of a trawling smack.

The trawling smack is the ideal fishing boat. So solidly built that it fears no weather, with a round bottom, tossed about unceasingly on the waves like

a cork, always on top, always thrashed by the harsh salt winds of the English Channel, it ploughs the sea unweariedly with bellying sail, dragging along at its side a huge trawling net, which scours the depths of the ocean, and detaches and gathers in all the animals asleep in the rocks, the flat fish glued to the sand, the heavy crabs with their curved claws, and the lobsters with their pointed mustaches.

When the breeze is fresh and the sea choppy, the boat starts in to trawl. The net is fastened all along a big log of wood clamped with iron and is let down by two ropes on pulleys at either end of the boat. And the boat, driven by the wind and the tide, draws along this apparatus which ransacks and plunders the depths of the sea.

Javel had on board his younger brother, four sailors and a cabin boy. He had set sail from Boulogne on a beautiful day to go trawling.

But presently a wind sprang up, and a hurricane obliged the smack to run to shore. She gained the English coast, but the high sea broke against the rocks and dashed on the beach, making it impossible to go into port, filling all the harbor entrances with foam and noise and danger.

The smack started off again, riding on the waves, tossed, shaken, dripping, buffeted by masses of water, but game in spite of everything; accustomed to this boisterous weather, which sometimes kept it roving between the two neighboring countries without its being able to make port in either.

At length the hurricane calmed down just as they were in the open, and although the sea was still high the captain gave orders to cast the net.

So it was lifted overboard, and two men in the

bows and two in the stern began to unwind the ropes that held it. It suddenly touched bottom, but a big wave made the boat heel, and Javel, junior, who was in the bows directing the lowering of the net, staggered, and his arm was caught in the rope which the shock had slipped from the pulley for an instant. He made a desperate effort to raise the rope with the other hand, but the net was down and the taut rope did not give.

The man cried out in agony. They all ran to his aid. His brother left the rudder. They all seized the rope, trying to free the arm it was bruising. But in vain. "We must cut it," said a sailor, and he took from his pocket a big knife, which, with two strokes, could save young Javel's arm.

But if the rope were cut the trawling net would be lost, and this net was worth money, a great deal of money, fifteen hundred francs. And it belonged to Javel, senior, who was tenacious of his property.

"No, do not cut, wait, I will luff," he cried, in great distress. And he ran to the helm and turned the rudder. But the boat scarcely obeyed it, being impeded by the net which kept it from going forward, and prevented also by the force of the tide and the wind.

Javel, junior, had sunk on his knees, his teeth clenched, his eyes haggard. He did not utter a word. His brother came back to him, in dread of the sailor's knife.

"Wait, wait," he said. "We will let down the anchor."

They cast anchor, and then began to turn the capstan to loosen the moorings of the net. They loos-

ened them at length and disengaged the imprisoned arm, in its bloody woolen sleeve.

Young Javel seemed like an idiot. They took off his jersey and saw a horrible sight, a mass of flesh from which the blood spurted as if from a pump. Then the young man looked at his arm and murmured: "Foutu" (done for).

Then, as the blood was making a pool on the deck of the boat, one of the sailors cried: "He will bleed to death, we must bind the vein."

So they took a cord, a thick, brown, tarry cord, and twisting it around the arm above the wound, tightened it with all their might. The blood ceased to spurt by slow degrees, and, presently, stopped altogether.

Young Javel rose, his arm hanging at his side. He took hold of it with the other hand, raised it, turned it over, shook it. It was all mashed, the bones broken, the muscles alone holding it together. He looked at it sadly, reflectively. Then he sat down on a folded sail and his comrades advised him to keep wetting the arm constantly to prevent it from mortifying.

They placed a pail of water beside him, and every few minutes he dipped a glass into it and bathed the frightful wound, letting the clear water trickle on to it.

"You would be better in the cabin,' said his brother. He went down, but came up again in an hour, not caring to be alone. And, besides, he preferred the fresh air. He sat down again on his sail and began to bathe his arm.

They made a good haul. The broad fish with their white bellies lay beside him, quivering in the throes

of death; he looked at them as he continued to bathe his crushed flesh.

As they were about to return to Boulogne the wind sprang up anew, and the little boat resumed its mad course, bounding and tumbling about, shaking up the poor wounded man.

Night came on. The sea ran high until dawn. As the sun rose the English coast was again visible, but, as the weather had abated a little, they turned back towards the French coast, tacking as they went.

Towards evening Javel, junior, called his comrades and showed them some black spots, all the horrible tokens of mortification in the portion of the arm below the broken bones.

The sailors examined it, giving their opinion.

"That might be the 'Black,'" thought one.

"He should put salt water on it," said another.

They brought some salt water and poured it on the wound. The injured man became livid, ground his teeth and writhed a little, but did not exclaim.

Then, as soon as the smarting had abated, he said to his brother:

"Give me your knife."

The brother handed it to him.

"Hold my arm up, quite straight, and pull it."

They did as he asked them.

Then he began to cut off his arm. He cut gently, carefully, severing al the tendons with this blade that was sharp as a razor. And, presently, there was only a stump left. He gave a deep sigh and said:

"It had to be done. It was done for."

He seemed relieved and breathed loud. He then

began again to pour water on the stump of arm that remained.

The sea was still rough and they could not make the shore.

When the day broke, Javel, junior, took the severed portion of his arm and examined it for a long time. Gangrene had set in. His comrades also examined it and handed it from one to the other, feeling it, turning it over, and sniffing at it.

"You must throw that into the sea at once," said his brother.

But Javel, junior, got angry.

"Oh, no! Oh, no! I don't want to. It belongs to me, does it not, as it is my arm?"

And he took and placed it between his feet.

"It will putrefy, just the same," said the older brother. Then an idea came to the injured man. In order to preserve the fish when the boat was long at sea, they packed it in salt, in barrels. He asked:

"Why can I not put it in pickle?"

"Why, that's a fact," exclaimed the others.

Then they emptied one of the barrels, which was full from the haul of the last few days; and right at the bottom of the barrel they laid the detached arm. They covered it with salt, and then put back the fish one by one.

One of the sailors said by way of joke:

"I hope we do not sell it at auction."

And everyone laughed, except the two Javels.

The wind was still boisterous. They tacked within sight of Boulogne until the following morning at ten o'clock. Young Javel continued to bathe his

wound. From time to time he rose and walked from one end to the other of the boat.

His brother, who was at the tiller, followed him with glances, and shook his head.

At last they ran into harbor.

The doctor examined the wound and pronounced it to be in good condition. He dressed it properly and ordered the patient to rest. But Javel would not go to bed until he got back his severed arm, and he returned at once to the dock to look for the barrel which he had marked with a cross.

It was emptied before him and he seized the arm, which was well preserved in the pickle, had shrunk and was freshened. He wrapped it up in a towel he had brought for the purpose and took it home.

His wife and children looked for a long time at this fragment of their father, feeling the fingers, and removing the grains of salt that were under the nails. Then they sent for a carpenter to make a little coffin.

The next day the entire crew of the trawling smack followed the funeral of the detached arm. The two brothers, side by side, led the procession; the parish beadle carried the corpse under his arm.

Javel, junior, gave up the sea. He obtained a small position on the dock, and when he subsequently talked about his accident, he would say confidentially to his auditors:

"If my brother had been willing to cut away the net, I should still have my arm, that is sure. But he was thinking only of his property."

MINUET

GREAT misfortunes do not affect me very much, said John Bridelle, an old bachelor who passed for a sceptic. I have seen war at quite close quarters; I walked across corpses without any feeling of pity. The great brutal facts of nature, or of humanity, may call forth cries of horror or indignation, but do not cause us that tightening of the heart, that shudder that goes down your spine at sight of certain little heartrending episodes.

The greatest sorrow that anyone can experience is certainly the loss of a child, to a mother; and the loss of his mother, to a man. It is intense, terrible, it rends your heart and upsets your mind; but one is healed of these shocks, just as large bleeding wounds become healed. Certain meetings, certain things half perceived, or surmised, certain secret sorrows, certain tricks of fate which awake in us a whole world of painful thoughts, which suddenly unclose to us the mysterious door of moral suffering, complicated, incurable; all the deeper because they appear benign, all the more bitter because they are intangible, all the more tenacious because they appear almost factitious, leave in our souls a sort of trail of sadness, a taste of bitterness, a feeling of disenchantment, from which it takes a long time to free ourselves.

MINUET

I have always present to my mind two or three things that others would surely not have noticed, but which penetrated my being like fine, sharp incurable stings.

You might not perhaps understand the emotion that I retained from these hasty impressions. I will tell you one of them. She was very old, but as lively as a young girl. It may be that my imagination alone is responsible for my emotion.

I am fifty. I was young then and studying law. I was rather sad, somewhat of a dreamer, full of a pessimistic philosophy and did not care much for noisy cafés, boisterous companions, or stupid girls. I rose early and one of my chief enjoyments was to walk alone about eight o'clock in the morning in the nursery garden of the Luxembourg.

You people never knew that nursery garden. It was like a forgotten garden of the last century, as pretty as the gentle smile of an old lady. Thick hedges divided the narrow regular paths, peaceful paths between two walls of carefully trimmed foliage. The gardener's great shears were pruning unceasingly these leafy partitions, and here and there one came across beds of flowers, lines of little trees looking like schoolboys out for a walk, companies of magnificent rose bushes, or regiments of fruit trees.

An entire corner of this charming spot was inhabited by bees. Their straw hives skilfully arranged at distances on boards had their entrances —as large as the opening of a thimble—turned towards the sun, and all along the paths one encountered these humming and gilded flies, the true

masters of this peaceful spot, the real promenaders of these quiet paths.

I came there almost every morning. I sat down on a bench and read. Sometimes I let my book fall on my knees, to dream, to listen to the life of Paris around me, and to enjoy the infinite repose of these old-fashioned hedges.

But I soon perceived that I was not the only one to frequent this spot as soon as the gates were opened, and I occasionally met face to face, at a turn in the path, a strange little old man.

He wore shoes with silver buckles, knee-breeches, a snuff-colored frock coat, a lace jabot, and an outlandish gray hat with wide brim and long-haired surface that might have come out of the ark.

He was thin, very thin, angular, grimacing and smiling. His bright eyes were restless beneath his eyelids which blinked continuously. He always carried in his hand a superb cane with a gold knob, which must have been for him some glorious souvenir.

This good man astonished me at first, then caused me the intensest interest. I watched him through the leafy walls, I followed him at a distance, stopping at a turn in the hedge so as not to be seen.

And one morning when he thought he was quite alone, he began to make the most remarkable motions. First he would give some little springs, then make a bow; then, with his slim legs, he would give a lively spring in the air, clapping his feet as he did so, and then turn round cleverly, skipping and frisking about in a comical manner, smiling as if he had an audience, twisting his poor little pup-

pet-like body, bowing pathetic and ridiculous little greetings into the empty air. He was dancing.

I stood petrified with amazement, asking myself which of us was crazy, he or I.

He stopped suddenly, advanced as actors do on the stage, then bowed and retreated with gracious smiles, and kissing his hand as actors do, his trembling hand, to the two rows of trimmed bushes.

Then he continued his walk with a solemn demeanor.

After that I never lost sight of him, and each morning he began anew his outlandish exercises.

I was wildly anxious to speak to him. I decided to risk it, and one day, after greeting him, I said:

"It is a beautiful day, monsieur."

He bowed.

"Yes, sir, the weather is just as it used to be."

A week later we were friends and I knew his history. He had been a dancing master at the opera, in the time of Louis XV. His beautiful cane was a present from the Comte de Clermont. And when we spoke about dancing he never stopping talking.

One day he said to me:

"I married La Castris, monsieur. I will introduce you to her if you wish it, but she does not get here till later. This garden, you see, is our delight and our life. It is all that remains of former days. It seems as though we could not exist if we did not have it. It is old and distingué, is it not? I seem to breathe an air here that has not changed since I was young. My wife and I pass all our afternoons here, but I come in the morning because I get up early."

As soon as I had finished luncheon I returned to

the Luxembourg, and presently perceived my friend offering his arm ceremoniously to a very old little lady dressed in black, to whom he introduced me. It was La Castris, the great dancer, beloved by princes, beloved by the king, beloved by all that century of gallantry that seems to have left behind it in the world an atmosphere of love.

We sat down on a bench. It was the month of May. An odor of flowers floated in the neat paths; a hot sun glided its rays between the branches and covered us with patches of light. The black dress of La Castris seemed to be saturated with sunlight.

The garden was empty. We heard the rattling of vehicles in the distance.

"Tell me," I said to the old dancer, "what was the minuet?"

He gave a start.

"The minuet, monsieur, is the queen of dances, and the dance of queens, do you understand? Since there is no longer any royalty, there is no longer any minuet."

And he began in a pompous manner a long dithyrambic eulogy which I could not understand. I wanted to have the steps, the movements, the positions, explained to me. He became confused, was amazed at his inability to make me understand, became nervous and worried.

Then suddenly, turning to his old companion who had remained silent and serious, he said:

"Élise, would you like—say—would you like, it would be very nice of you, would you like to show this gentleman what it was?"

She turned eyes uneasily in all directions, then

rose without saying a word and took her position opposite him.

Then I witnessed an unheard-of thing.

They advanced and retreated with childlike grimaces, smiling, swinging each other, bowing, skipping about like two automaton dolls moved by some old mechanical contrivance, somewhat damaged, but made by a clever workman according to the fashion of his time.

And I looked at them, my heart filled with extraordinary emotions, my soul touched with an indescribable melancholy. I seemed to see before me a pathetic and comical apparition, the out-of-date ghost of a former century.

They suddenly stopped. They had finished all the figures of the dance. For some seconds they stood opposite each other, smiling in an astonishing manner. Then they fell on each other's necks sobbing.

I left for the provinces three days later. I never saw them again. When I returned to Paris, two years later, the nursery had been destroyed. What became of them, deprived of the dear garden of former days, with its mazes, its odor of the past, and the graceful windings of its hedges?

Are they dead? Are they wandering among modern streets like hopeless exiles? Are they dancing —grotesque spectres—a fantastic minuet in the moonlight, amid the cypresses of a cemetery, along the pathways bordered by graves?

Their memory haunts me, obsesses me, torments me, remains with me like a wound. Why? I do not know.

No doubt you think that very absurd?

THE SON

THE two old friends were walking in the garden in bloom, where spring was bringing everything to life.

One was a senator, the other a member of the French Academy, both serious men, full of very logical but solemn arguments, men of note and reputation.

They talked first of politics, exchanging opinions; not on ideas, but on men, personalities in this regard taking the predominance over ability. Then they recalled some memories. Then they walked along in silence, enervated by the warmth of the air.

A large bed of wallflowers breathed out a delicate sweetness. A mass of flowers of all species and color flung their fragrance to the breeze, while a cytisus covered with yellow clusters scattered its fine pollen abroad, a golden cloud, with an odor of honey that bore its balmy seed across space, similar to the sachet-powders of perfumers.

The senator stopped, breathed in the cloud of floating pollen, looked at the fertile shrub, yellow as the sun, whose seed was floating in the air, and said:

"When one considers that these imperceptible fragrant atoms will create existences at a hundred leagues from here, will send a thrill through the

fibres and sap of female trees and produce beings with roots, growing from a germ, just as we do, mortal like ourselves, and who will be replaced by other beings of the same order, like ourselves again!"

And, standing in front of the brilliant cytisus, whose live pollen was shaken off by each breath of air, the senator added:

"Ah, old fellow, if you had to keep count of all your children you would be mightily embarrassed. Here is one who generates freely, and then lets them go without a pang and troubles himself no more about them."

"We do the same, my friend," said the academician.

"Yes, I do not deny it; we let them go sometimes," resumed the senator, "but we are aware that we do, and that constitutes our superiority."

"No, that is not what I mean," said the other, shaking his head. "You see, my friend, that there is scarcely a man who has not some children that he does not know, children—'father unknown'—whom he has generated almost unconsciously, just as this tree reproduces.

"If we had to keep account of our amours, we should be just as embarrassed as this cytisus which you apostrophized would be in counting up his descendants, should we not?

"From eighteen to forty years, in fact, counting in every chance cursory acquaintanceship, we may well say that we have—been intimate with two or three hundred women.

"Well, then, my friend, among this number can you be sure that you have not had children by at

least one of them, and that you have not in the streets, or in the bagnio, some blackguard of a son who steals from and murders decent people, *i.e.*, ourselves; or else a daughter in some disreputable place, or, if she has the good fortune to be deserted by her mother, as cook in some family?

"Consider, also, that almost all those whom we call 'prostitutes' have one or two children of whose paternal parentage they are ignorant, generated by chance at the price of ten or twenty francs. In every business there is profit and loss. These wildings constitute the 'loss' in their profession. Who generated them? You—I—we all did, the men called 'gentlemen'! They are the consequences of our jovial little dinners, of our gay evenings, of those hours when our comfortable physical being impels us to chance liaisons.

"Thieves, marauders, all these wretches, in fact, are our children. And that is better for us than if we were their children, for those scoundrels generate also!

"I have in my mind a very horrible story that I will relate to you. It has caused me incessant remorse, and, further than that, a continual doubt, a disquieting uncertainty, that, at times, torments me frightfully.

"When I was twenty-five I undertook a walking tour through Brittany with one of my friends, now a member of the cabinet.

"After walking steadily for fifteen or twenty days and visiting the Côtes-du-Nord and part of Finistère we reached Douarnenez. From there we went without halting to the wild promontory of Raz by the bay of Les Trépassés, and passed the night in a

village whose name ends in 'of.' The next morning a strange lassitude kept my friend in bed; I say bed from habit, for our couch consisted simply of two bundles of straw.

"It would never do to be ill in this place. So I made him get up, and we reached Andierne about four or five o'clock in the evening.

"The following day he felt a little better, and we set out again. But on the road he was seized with intolerable pain, and we could scarcely get as far as Pont Labbé.

"Here, at least, there was an inn. My friend went to bed, and the doctor, who had been sent for from Quimper, announced that he had a high fever, without being able to determine its nature.

"Do you know Pont Labbé? No? Well, then, it is the most Breton of all this Breton Brittany, which extends from the promontory of Raz to the Morbihan, of this land which contains the essence of the Breton manners, legends and customs. Even to-day this corner of the country has scarcely changed. I say 'even to-day,' for I now go there every year, alas!

"An old château laves the walls of its towers in a great melancholy pond, melancholy and frequented by flights of wild birds. It has an outlet in a river on which boats can navigate as far as the town. In the narrow streets with their old-time houses the men wear big hats, embroidered waistcoats and four coats, one on top of the other; the inside one, as large as your hand, barely covering the shoulder-blades, and the outside one coming to just above the seat of the trousers.

"The girls, tall, handsome and fresh have their

bosoms crushed in a cloth bodice which makes an armor, compresses them, not allowing one even to guess at their robust and tortured neck. They also wear a strange headdress. On their temples two bands embroidered in colors frame their face, inclosing the hair, which falls in a shower at the back of their heads, and is then turned up and gathered on top of the head under a singular cap, often woven with gold or silver thread.

"The servant at our inn was eighteen at most, with very blue eyes, a pale blue with two tiny black pupils, short teeth close together, which she showed continually when she laughed, and which seemed strong enough to grind granite.

"She did not know a word of French, speaking only Breton, as did most of her companions.

"As my friend did not improve much, and although he had no definite malady, the doctor forbade him to continue his journey yet, ordering complete rest. I spent my days with him, and the little maid would come in incessantly, bringing either my dinner or some herb tea.

"I teased her a little, which seemed to amuse her, but we did not chat, of course, as we could not understand each other.

"But one night, after I had stayed quite late with my friend and was going back to my room, I passed the girl, who was going to her room. It was just opposite my open door, and, without reflection, and more for fun than anything else, I abruptly seized her round the waist, and before she recovered from her astonishment I had thrown her down and locked her in my room. She looked at me, amazed, excited, terrified, not daring to cry out for fear of

a scandal and of being probably driven out, first by her employers and then, perhaps, by her father.

"I did it as a joke at first. She defended herself bravely, and at the first chance she ran to the door, drew back the bolt and fled.

"I scarcely saw her for several days. She would not let me come near her. But when my friend was cured and we were to get out on our travels again I saw her coming into my room about midnight the night before our departure, just after I had retired.

"She threw herself into my arms and embraced me passionately, giving me all the assurances of tenderness and despair that a woman can give when she does not know a word of our language.

"A week later I had forgotten this adventure, so common and frequent when one is travelling, the inn servants being generally destined to amuse travellers in this way.

"I was thirty before I thought of it again, or returned to Pont Labbé.

"But in 1876 I revisited it by chance during a trip into Brittany, which I made in order to look up some data for a book and to become permeated with the atmosphere of the different places.

"Nothing seemed changed. The château still laved its gray wall in the pond outside the little town; the inn was the same, though it had been repaired, renovated and looked more modern. As I entered it I was received by two young Breton girls of eighteen, fresh and pretty, bound up in their tight cloth bodices, with their silver caps and wide embroidered bands on their ears.

"It was about six o'clock in the evening. I sat

down to dinner, and as the host was assiduous in waiting on me himself, fate, no doubt, impelled me to say:

"'Did you know the former proprietors of this house? I spent about ten days here thirty years ago. I am talking old times.'

"'Those were my parents, monsieur,' he replied.

"Then I told him why we had stayed over at that time, how my comrade had been delayed by illness. He did not let me finish.

"'Oh, I recollect perfectly. I was about fifteen or sixteen. You slept in the room at the end and your friend in the one I have taken for myself, overlooking the street.'

"It was only then that the recollection of the little maid came vividly to my mind. I asked: 'Do you remember a pretty little servant who was then in your father's employ, and who had, if my memory does not deceive me, pretty eyes and fresh-looking teeth?'

"'Yes, monsieur; she died in childbirth some time after.'

"And, pointing to the courtyard where a thin, lame man was stirring up the manure, he added:

"'That is her son.'

"I began to laugh:

"'He is not handsome and does not look much like his mother. No doubt he looks like his father.'

"'That is very possible,' replied the innkeeper; 'but we never knew whose child it was. She died without telling any one, and no one here knew of her having a beau. Every one was hugely astonished when they heard she was *enceinte,* and no one would believe it.'

"A sort of unpleasant chill came over me, one of those painful surface wounds that affect us like the shadow of an impending sorrow. And I looked at the man in the yard. He had just drawn water for the horses and was carrying two buckets, limping as he walked, with a painful effort of his shorter leg. His clothes were ragged, he was hideously dirty, with long yellow hair, so tangled that it looked like strands of rope falling down at either side of his face.

"'He is not worth much,' continued the innkeeper; 'we have kept him for charity's sake. Perhaps he would have turned out better if he had been brought up like other folks. But what could one do, monsieur? No father, no mother, no money! My parents took pity on him, but he was not their child, you understand.'

"I said nothing.

"I slept in my old room, and all night long I thought of this frightful stableman, saying to myself: 'Supposing it is my own son? Could I have caused that girl's death and procreated this being? It was quite possible!'

"I resolved to speak to this man and to find out the exact date of his birth. A variation of two months would set my doubts at rest.

"I sent for him the next day. But he could not speak French. He looked as if he could not understand anything, being absolutely ignorant of his age, which I had inquired of him through one of the maids. He stood before me like an idiot, twirling his hat in his knotted, disgusting hands, laughing stupidly, with something of his mother's laugh in the corners of his mouth and of his eyes.

"The landlord, appearing on the scene, went to look for the birth certificate of this wretched being. He was born eight months and twenty-six days after my stay at Pont Labbé, for I recollect perfectly that we reached Lorient on the fifteenth of August. The certificate contained this description: 'Father unknown.' The mother called herself Jeanne Kerradec.

"Then my heart began to beat rapidly. I could not utter a word, for I felt as if I were choking. I looked at this animal whose long yellow hair reminded me of a straw heap, and the beggar, embarrassed by my gaze, stopped laughing, turned his head aside, and wanted to get away.

"All day long I wandered beside the little river, giving way to painful reflections. But what was the use of reflection? I could be sure of nothing. For hours and hours I weighed all the pros and cons in favor of or against the probability of my being the father, growing nervous over inexplicable suppositions, only to return incessantly to the same horrible uncertainty, then to the still more atrocious conviction that this man was my son.

"I could eat no dinner, and went to my room. I lay awake for a long time, and when I finally fell asleep I was haunted by horrible visions. I saw this laborer laughing in my face and calling me 'papa.' Then he changed into a dog and bit the calves of my legs, and no matter how fast I ran he still followed me, and instead of barking, talked and reviled me. Then he appeared before my colleagues at the Academy, who had assembled to decide whether I was really his father; and one of them cried out: 'There can be no doubt about it! See

how he resembles him.' And, indeed, I could see that this monster looked like me. And I awoke with this idea fixed in my mind and with an insane desire to see the man again and assure myself whether or not we had similar features.

"I joined him as he was going to mass (it was Sunday) and I gave him five francs as I gazed at him anxiously. He began to laugh in an idiotic manner, took the money, and then, embarrassed afresh at my gaze, he ran off, after stammering an almost inarticulate word that, no doubt, meant 'thank you.'

"My day passed in the same distress of mind as on the previous night. I sent for the landlord, and, with the greatest caution, skill and tact, I told him that I was interested in this poor creature, so abandoned by every one and deprived of everything, and I wished to do something for him.

"But the man replied: 'Oh, do not think of it, monsieur; he is of no account; you will only cause yourself annoyance. I employ him to clean out the stable, and that is all he can do. I give him his board and let him sleep with the horses. He needs nothing more. If you have an old pair of trousers, you might give them to him, but they will be in rags in a week.'

"I did not insist, intending to think it over.

"The poor wretch came home that evening frightfully drunk, came near setting fire to the house, killed a horse by hitting it with a pickaxe, and ended up by lying down to sleep in the mud in the midst of the pouring rain, thanks to my donation.

"They begged me next day not to give him any more money. Brandy drove him crazy, and as soon as he had two sous in his pocket he would spend

in drink. The landlord added: 'Giving him money is like trying to kill him.' The man had never, never in his life had more than a few centimes, thrown to him by travellers, and he knew of no destination for this metal but the wine shop.

"I spent several hours in my room with an open book before me which I pretended to read, but in reality looking at this animal, my son! my son! trying to discover if he looked anything like me. After careful scrutiny I seemed to recognize a similarity in the lines of the forehead and the root of the nose, and I was soon convinced that there was a resemblance, concealed by the difference in garb and the man's hideous head of hair.

"I could not stay here any longer without arousing suspicion, and I went away, my heart crushed, leaving with the innkeeper some money to soften the existence of his servant.

"For six years now I have lived with this idea in my mind, this horrible uncertainty, this abominable suspicion. And each year an irresistible force takes me back to Pont Labbé. Every year I condemn myself to the torture of seeing this animal raking the manure, imagining that he resembles me, and endeavoring, always vainly, to render him some assistance. And each year I return more uncertain, more tormented, more worried.

"I tried to have him taught, but he is a hopeless idiot. I tried to make his life less hard. He is an irreclaimable drunkard, and spends in drink all the money one gives him, and knows enough to sell his new clothes in order to get brandy.

"I tried to awaken his master's sympathy, so that he should look after him, offering to pay him

for doing so. The innkeeper, finally surprised, said, very wisely: 'All that you do for him, monsieur, will only help to destroy him. He must be kept like a prisoner. As soon as he has any spare time, or any comfort, he becomes wicked. If you wish to do good, there is no lack of abandoned children, but select one who will appreciate your attention.'

"What could I say?

"If I allowed the slightest suspicion of the doubts that tortured me to escape, this idiot would assuredly become cunning, in order to blackmail me, to compromise me and ruin me. He would call out 'papa,' as in my dream.

"And I said to myself that I had killed the mother and lost this atrophied creature, this larva of the stable, born and raised amid the manure, this man who, if brought up like others, would have been like others.

"And you cannot imagine what a strange, embarrassed and intolerable feeling comes over me when he stands before me and I reflect that he came from myself, that he belongs to me through the intimate bond that links father and son, that, thanks to the terrible law of heredity, he is my own self in a thousand ways, in his blood and his flesh, and that he has even the same germs of disease, the same leaven of emotions.

"I have an incessant restless, distressing longing to see him, and the sight of him causes me intense suffering, as I look down from my window and watch him for hours removing and carting the horse manure, saying to myself: 'That is my son.'

"And I sometimes feel an irresistible longing to

embrace him. I have never even touched his dirty hand."

The academician was silent. His companion, a tactful man, murmured: "Yes, indeed, we ought to take a closer interest in children who have no father."

A gust of wind passing through the tree shook its yellow clusters, enveloping in a fragrant and delicate mist the two old men, who inhaled in the fragrance with deep breaths.

The senator added: "It is good to be twenty-five and even to have children like that."

THAT PIG OF A MORIN

"THERE, my friend," I said to Labarbe, "you have just repeated those five words, *that pig of a Morin.* Why on earth do I never hear Morin's name mentioned without his being called *a pig?*"

Labarbe, who is a deputy, looked at me with his owl-like eyes and said: "Do you mean to say that you do not know Morin's story and you come from La Rochelle?" I was obliged to declare that I did not know Morin's story, so Labarbe rubbed his hands and began his recital.

"You knew Morin, did you not, and you remember his large linen-draper's shop on the Quai de la Rochelle?" "Yes, perfectly."

"Well, then. You must know that in 1862 or '63 Morin went to spend a fortnight in Paris for pleasure, or for his pleasures, but under the pretext of renewing his stock, and you also know what a fortnight in Paris means to a country shopkeeper; it fires his blood. The theatre every evening, women's dresses rustling up against you and continual excitement; one goes almost mad with it. One sees nothing but dancers in tights, actresses in very low dresses, round legs, fat shoulders, all nearly within reach of one's hands, without daring, or being able, to touch them, and one scarcely tastes food. When one leaves the city one's heart is still all in a flutter

and one's mind still exhilarated by a sort of longing for kisses which tickles one's lips.

"Morin was in that condition when he took his ticket for La Rochelle by the eight-forty night express. As he was walking up and down the waiting-room at the station he stopped suddenly in front of a young lady who was kissing an old one. She had her veil up, and Morin murmured with delight: 'By Jove, what a pretty woman!'

"When she had said 'good-by' to the old lady she went into the waiting-room, and Morin followed her; then she went on the platform and Morin still followed her; then she got into an empty carriage, and he again followed her. There were very few travellers on the express. The engine whistled and the train started. They were alone. Morin devoured her with his eyes. She appeared to be about nineteen or twenty and was fair, tall, with a bold look. She wrapped a railway rug round her and stretched herself on the seat to sleep.

"Morin asked himself: 'I wonder who she is?' And a thousand conjectures, a thousand projects went through his head. He said to himself: 'So many adventures are told as happening on railway journeys that this may be one that is going to present itself to me. Who knows? A piece of good luck like that happens very suddenly, and perhaps I need only be a little venturesome. Was it not Danton who said: "Audacity, more audacity and always audacity"? If it was not Danton it was Mirabeau, but that does not matter. But then I have no audacity, and that is the difficulty. Oh! If one only knew, if one could only read people's minds! I will bet that every day one passes by magnificent oppor-

tunities without knowing it, though a gesture would be enough to let me know her mind.'

"Then he imagined to himself combinations which conducted him to triumph. He pictured some chivalrous deed or merely some slight service which he rendered her, a lively, gallant conversation which ended in a declaration.

"But he could find no opening, had no pretext, and he waited for some fortunate circumstance, with his heart beating and his mind topsy-turvy. The night passed and the pretty girl still slept, while Morin was meditating his own fall. The day broke and soon the first ray of sunlight appeared in the sky, a long, clear ray which shone on the face of the sleeping girl and woke her. She sat up, looked at the country, then at Morin and smiled. She smiled like a happy woman, with an engaging and bright look, and Morin trembled. Certainly that smile was intended for him; it was discreet invitation, the signal which he was waiting for. That smile meant to say: 'How stupid, what a ninny, what a dolt, what a donkey you are, to have sat there on your seat like a post all night!

"'Just look at me, am I not charming? And you have sat like that for the whole night, when you have been alone with a pretty woman, you great simpleton!'

"She was still smiling as she looked at him; she even began to laugh; and he lost his head trying to find something suitable to say, no matter what. But he could think of nothing, nothing, and then, seized with a coward's courage, he said to himself: 'So much the worse, I will risk everything,' and suddenly, without the slightest warning, he went to-

ward her, his arms extended, his lips protruding, and, seizing her in his arms, he kissed her.

"She sprang up immediately with a bound, crying out: 'Help! help!' and screaming with terror, and then she opened the carriage door and waved her arm out, mad with terror and trying to jump out, while Morin, who was almost distracted and feeling sure that she would throw herself out, held her by the skirt and stammered: 'Oh, madame! oh, madame!'

"The train slackened speed and then stopped. Two guards rushed up at the young woman's frantic signals. She threw herself into their arms, stammering: 'That man wanted—wanted—to—to——' And then she fainted.

"They were at Mauzé station, and the gendarme on duty arrested Morin. When the victom of his indiscreet admiration had regained her consciousness, she made her charge against him, and the police drew it up. The poor linen draper did not reach home till night, with a prosecution hanging over him for an outrage to morals in a public place.

II

"At that time I was editor of the *Fanal des Charentes,* and I used to meet Morin every day at the Café du Commerce, and the day after his adventure he came to see me, as he did not know what to do. I did not hide my opinion from him, but said to him: 'You are no better than a pig. No decent man behaves like that.'

"He cried. His wife had given him a beating, and he foresaw his trade ruined, his name dragged through the mire and dishonored, his friends scandalized and taking no notice of him. In the end he excited my pity, and I sent for my colleague, Rivet, a jocular but very sensible little man, to give us his advice.

"He advised me to see the public prosecutor, who was a friend of mine, and so I sent Morin home and went to call on the magistrate. He told me that the woman who had been insulted was a young lady, Mademoiselle Henriette Bonnel, who had just received her certificate as governess in Paris and spent her holidays with her uncle and aunt, who were very respectable tradespeople in Mauzé. What made Morin's case all the more serious was that the uncle had lodged a complaint, but the public official had consented to let the matter drop if this complaint were withdrawn, so we must try and get him to do this.

"I went back to Morin's and found him in bed, ill with excitement and distress. His wife, a tall raw-boned woman with a beard, was abusing him continually, and she showed me into the room, shouting at me: 'So you have come to see that pig of a Morin. Well, there he is, the darling!' And she planted herself in front of the bed, with her hands on her hips. I told him how matters stood, and he begged me to go and see the girl's uncle and aunt. It was a delicate mission, but I undertook it, and the poor devil never ceased repeating: 'I assure you I did not even kiss her; no, not even that. I will take my oath to it!'

"I replied: 'It is all the same; you are nothing

but a pig.' And I took a thousand francs which he gave me to employ as I thought best, but as I did not care to venture to her uncle's house alone, I begged Rivet to go with me, which he agreed to do on condition that we went immediately, for he had some urgent business at La Rochelle that afternoon. So two hours later we rang at the door of a pretty country house. An attractive girl came and opened the door to us, assuredly the young lady in question, and I said to Rivet in a low voice: 'Confound it! I begin to understand Morin!'

"The uncle, Monsieur Tonnelet, subscribed to the *Fanal,* and was a fervent political coreligionist of ours. He received us with open arms and congratulated us and wished us joy; he was delighted at having the two editors in his house, and Rivet whispered to me: 'I think we shall be able to arrange the matter of that pig of a Morin for him.'

"The niece had left the room and I introduced the delicate subject. I waved the spectre of scandal before his eyes; I accentuated the inevitable depreciation which the young lady would suffer if such an affair became known, for nobody would believe in a simple kiss, and the good man seemed undecided, but he could not make up his mind about anything without his wife, who would not be in until late that evening. But suddenly he uttered an exclamation of triumph: 'Look here, I have an excellent idea; I will keep you here to dine and sleep, and when my wife comes home I hope we shall be able to arrange matters.'

"Rivet resisted at first, but the wish to extricate that pig of a Morin decided him, and we accepted the invitation, and the uncle got up radiant, called

his niece and proposed that we should take a stroll in his grounds, saying: 'We will leave serious matters until the morning.' Rivet and he began to talk politics, while I soon found myself lagging a little behind with the girl who was really charming—charming—and with the greatest precaution I began to speak to her about her adventure and try to make her my ally. She did not, however, appear the least confused, and listened to me like a person who was enjoying the whole thing very much.

"I said to her: 'Just think, mademoiselle, how unpleasant it will be for you. You will have to appear in court, to encounter malicious looks, to speak before everybody and to recount that unfortunate occurrence in the railway carriage in public. Do you not think, between ourselves, that it would have been much better for you to have put that dirty scoundrel back in his place without calling for assistance, and merely to change your carriage?' She began to laugh and replied: 'What you say is quite true, but what could I do? I was frightened, and when one is frightened one does not stop to reason with one's self. As soon as I realized the situation I was very sorry that I had called out, but then it was too late. You must also remember that the idiot threw himself upon me like a madman, without saying a word and looking like a lunatic. I did not even know what he wanted of me.'

"She looked me full in the face without being nervous or intimidated, and I said to myself: 'She is a queer sort of girl, that: I can quite see how that pig Morin came to make a mistake,' and I went on jokingly: 'Come, mademoiselle, confess that he was excusable, for, after all, a man cannot find himself

opposite such a pretty girl as you are without feeling a natural desire to kiss her.'

"She laughed more than ever and showed her teeth and said: 'Between the desire and the act, monsieur, there is room for respect.' It was an odd expression to use, although it was not very clear, and I asked abruptly: 'Well, now, suppose I were to kiss you, what would you do?' She stopped to look at me from head to foot and then said calmly: 'Oh, you? That is quite another matter.'

"I knew perfectly well, by Jove, that it was not the same thing at all, as everybody in the neighborhood called me 'Handsome Labarbe'—I was thirty years old in those days—but I asked her: 'And why, pray?' She shrugged her shoulders and replied: 'Well! because you are not so stupid as he is.' And then she added, looking at me slyly: 'Nor so ugly, either.' And before she could make a movement to avoid me I had implanted a hearty kiss on her cheek. She sprang aside, but it was too late, and then she said: 'Well, you are not very bashful, either! But don't do that sort of thing again.'

"I put on a humble look and said in a low voice: 'Oh, mademoiselle! as for me, if I long for one thing more than another it is to be summoned before a magistrate for the same reason as Morin.'

"'Why?' she asked. And, looking steadily at her, I replied: 'Because you are one of the most beautiful creatures living; because it would be an honor and a glory for me to have wished to offer you violence, and because people would have said, after seeing you: "Well, Labarbe has richly deserved what he has got, but he is a lucky fellow, all the same."'

"She began to laugh heartily again and said: 'How

funny you are!' And she had not finished the word 'funny' before I had her in my arms and was kissing her ardently wherever I could find a place, on her forehead, on her eyes, on her lips occasionally, on her cheeks, all over her head, some part of which she was obliged to leave exposed, in spite of herself, to defend the others; but at last she managed to release herself, blushing and angry. 'You are very unmannerly, monsieur,' she said, 'and I am sorry I listened to you.'

"I took her hand in some confusion and stammered out: 'I beg your pardon. I beg your pardon, mademoiselle. I have offended you; I have acted like a brute! Do not be angry with me for what I have done. If you knew——' I vainly sought for some excuse, and in a few moments she said: 'There is nothing for me to know, monsieur.' But I had found something to say, and I cried: 'Mademoiselle, I love you!'

"She was really surprised and raised her eyes to look at me, and I went on: 'Yes, mademoiselle, and pray listen to me. I do not know Morin, and I do not care anything about him. It does not matter to me the least if he is committed for trial and locked up meanwhile. I saw you here last year, and I was so taken with you that the thought of you has never left me since, and it does not matter to me whether you believe me or not. I thought you adorable, and the remembrance of you took such a hold on me that I longed to see you again, and so I made use of that fool Morin as a pretext, and here I am. Circumstances have made me exceed the due limits of respect, and I can only beg you to pardon me.'

"She looked at me to see if I was in earnest and

was ready to smile again. Then she murmured: 'You humbug!' But I raised my hand and said in a sincere voice (and I really believe that I was sincere): 'I swear to you that I am speaking the truth,' and she replied quite simply: 'Don't talk nonsense!'

"We were alone, quite alone, as Rivet and her uncle had disappeared down a sidewalk, and I made her a real declaration of love, while I squeezed and kissed her hands, and she listened to it as to something new and agreeable, without exactly knowing how much of it she was to believe, while in the end I felt agitated, and at last really myself believed what I said. I was pale, anxious and trembling, and I gently put my arm round her waist and spoke to her softly, whispering into the little curls over her ears. She seemed in a trance, so absorbed in thought was she.

"Then her hand touched mine, and she pressed it, and I gently squeezed her waist with a trembling, and gradually firmer, grasp. She did not move now, and I touched her cheek with my lips, and suddenly without seeking them my lips met hers. It was a long, long kiss, and it would have lasted longer still if I had not heard a *hm! hm!* just behind me, at which she made her escape through the bushes, and turning round I saw Rivet coming toward me, and, standing in the middle of the path, he said without even smiling: 'So that is the way you settle the affair of that pig of a Morin.'. And I replied conceitedly: 'One does what one can, my dear fellow. But what about the uncle? How have you got on with him? I will answer for the niece.' 'I have not been so fortunate with him,' he replied.

"Whereupon I took his arm and we went indoors.

III

"Dinner made me lose my head altogether. I sat beside her, and my hand continually met hers under the tablecloth, my foot touched hers and our glances met.

"After dinner we took a walk by moonlight, and I whispered all the tender things I could think of to her. I held her close to me, kissed her every moment, while her uncle and Rivet were arguing as they walked in front of us. They went in, and soon a messenger brought a telegram from her aunt, saying that she would not return until the next morning at seven o'clock by the first train.

"'Very well, Henriette,' her uncle said, 'go and show the gentlemen their rooms.' She showed Rivet his first, and he whispered to me: 'There was no danger of her taking us into yours first.' Then she took me to my room, and as soon as she was alone with me I took her in my arms again and tried to arouse her emotion, but when she saw the danger she escaped out of the room, and I retired, very much put out and excited and feeling rather foolish, for I knew that I should not sleep much, and I was wondering how I could have committed such a mistake, when there was a gentle knock at my door, and on my asking who was there a low voice replied: 'I.'

"I dressed myself quickly and opened the door, and she came in. 'I forgot to ask you what you take in the morning,' she said; 'chocolate, tea or coffee?' I put my arms round her impetuously and said, devouring her with kisses: 'I will take—I will take——'

"But she freed herself from my arms, blew out my candle and disappeared and left me alone in the dark, furious, trying to find some matches, and not able to do so. At last I got some and I went into the passage, feeling half mad, with my candlestick in my hand.

"What was I about to do? I did not stop to reason, I only wanted to find her, and I would. I went a few steps without reflecting, but then I suddenly thought: 'Suppose I should walk into the uncle's room, what should I say?' And I stood still, with my head a void and my heart beating. But in a few moments I thought of an answer: 'Of course, I shall say that I was looking for Rivet's room to speak to him about an important matter,' and I began to inspect all the doors, trying to find hers, and at last I took hold of a handle at a venture, turned it and went in. There was Henriette, sitting on her bed and looking at me in tears. So I gently turned the key, and going up to her on tiptoe, I said: 'I forgot to ask you for something to read, mademoiselle.'

"I was stealthily returning to my room when a rough hand seized me and a voice—it was Rivet's —whispered in my ear: 'So you have not yet quite settled that affair of Morin's?'

"At seven o'clock the next morning Henriette herself brought me a cup of chocolate. I never have drunk anything like it, soft, velvety, perfumed, delicious. I could hardly take away my lips from the cup, and she had hardly left the room when Rivet came in. He seemed nervous and irritable, like a man who had not slept, and he said to me crossly

'If you go on like this you will end by spoiling the affair of that pig of a Morin!'

"At eight o'clock the aunt arrived. Our discussion was very short, for they withdrew their complaint, and I left five hundred francs for the poor of the town. They wanted to keep us for the day, and they arranged an excursion to go and see some ruins. Henriette made signs to me to stay, behind her parents' back, and I accepted, but Rivet was determined to go, and though I took him aside and begged and prayed him to do this for me, he appeared quite exasperated and kept saying to me: 'I have had enough of that pig of a Morin's affair, do you hear?'

"Of course I was obliged to leave also, and it was one of the hardest moments of my life. I could have gone on arranging that business as long as I lived, and when we were in the railway carriage, after shaking hands with her in silence, I said to Rivet: 'You are a mere brute!' And he replied: 'My dear fellow, you were beginning to annoy me confoundedly.'

"On getting to the *Fanal* office, I saw a crowd waiting for us, and as soon as they saw us they all exclaimed: 'Well, have you settled the affair of that pig of a Morin?' All La Rochelle was excited about it, and Rivet, who had got over his ill-humor on the journey, had great difficulty in keeping himself from laughing as he said: 'Yes, we have managed it, thanks to Labarbe.' And we went to Morin's.

"He was sitting in an easy-chair with mustard plasters on his legs and cold bandages on his head, nearly dead with misery. He was coughing with the short cough of a dying man, without any one know-

ing how he had caught it, and his wife looked at him like a tigress ready to eat him, and as soon as he saw us he trembled so violently as to make his hands and knees shake, so I said to him immediately: 'It is all settled, you dirty scamp, but don't do such a thing again.'

"He got up, choking, took my hands and kissed them as if they had belonged to a prince, cried, nearly fainted, embraced Rivet and even kissed Madame Morin, who gave him such a push as to send him staggering back into his chair; but he never got over the blow; his mind had been too much upset. In all the country round, moreover, he was called nothing but 'that pig of a Morin,' and that epithet went through him like a sword-thrust every time he heard it. When a street boy called after him 'Pig!' he turned his head instinctively. His friends also overwhelmed him with horrible jokes and used to ask him, whenever they were eating ham, 'Is it a bit of yourself?' He died two years later.

"As for myself, when I was a candiate for the Chamber of Deputies in 1875, I called on the new notary at Fousserre, Monsieur Belloncle, to solicit his vote, and a tall, handsome and evidently wealthy lady received me. 'You do not know me again?' she said. And I stammered out: 'Why—no—madame.' 'Henriette Bonnel.' 'Ah!' And I felt myself turning pale, while she seemed perfectly at her ease and looked at me with a smile.

"As soon as she had left me alone with her husband he took both my hands, and, squeezing them as if he meant to crush them, he said: 'I have been intending to go and see you for a long time, my dear sir, for my wife has very often talked to me

about you. I know—yes, I know under what painful circumstances you made her acquaintance, and I know also how perfectly you behaved, how full of delicacy, tact and devotion you showed yourself in the affair——' He hesitated and then said in a lower tone, as if he had been saying something low and coarse, 'in the affair of that pig of a Morin.'"

SAINT ANTHONY

THEY called him Saint Anthony, because his name was Anthony, and also, perhaps, because he was a good fellow, jovial, a lover of practical jokes, a tremendous eater and a heavy drinker and a gay fellow, although he was sixty years old.

He was a big peasant of the district of Caux, with a red face, large chest and stomach, and perched on two legs that seemed too slight for the bulk of his body.

He was a widower and lived alone with his two men servants and a maid on his farm, which he conducted with shrewd economy. He was careful of his own interests, understood business and the raising of cattle, and farming. His two sons and his three daughters, who had married well, were living in the neighborhood and came to dine with their father once a month. His vigor of body was famous in all the countryside. "He is as strong as Saint Anthony," had become a kind of proverb.

At the time of the Prussian invasion Saint Anthony, at the wine shop, promised to eat an army, for he was a braggart, like a true Norman, a bit of a coward and a blusterer. He banged his fist on the wooden table, making the cups and the brandy glasses dance, and cried with the assumed wrath of a good fellow, with a flushed face and a sly look in

his eye: "I shall have to eat some of them, nom de Dieu!" He reckoned that the Prussians would not come as far as Tanneville, but when he heard they were at Rautot he never went out of the house, and constantly watched the road from the little window of his kitchen, expecting at any moment to see the bayonets go by.

One morning as he was eating his luncheon with the servants the door opened and the mayor of the commune, Maître Chicot, appeared, followed by a soldier wearing a black copper-pointed helmet. Saint Anthony bounded to his feet and his servants all looked at him, expecting to see him slash the Prussian. But he merely shook hands with the mayor, who said:

"Here is one for you, Saint Anthony. They came last night. Don't do anything foolish, above all things, for they talked of shooting and burning everything if there is the slightest unpleasantness. I have given you warning. Give him something to eat; he looks like a good fellow. Good-day. I am going to call on the rest. There are enough for all." And he went out.

Father Anthony, who had turned pale, looked at the Prussian. He was a big, young fellow with plump, white skin, blue eyes, fair hair, unshaven to his cheek bones, who looked stupid, timid and good. The shrewd Norman read him at once, and, reassured, he made him a sign to sit down. Then he said: "Will you take some soup?"

The stranger did not understand. Anthony then became bolder, and pushing a plateful of soup right under his nose, he said: "Here, swallow that, big pig!"

The soldier answered "Ya," and began to eat greedily, while the farmer, triumphant, feeling he had regained his reputation, winked his eye at the servants, who were making strange grimaces, what with their terror and their desire to laugh.

When the Prussian had devoured his soup, Saint Anthony gave him another plateful, which disappeared in like manner; but he flinched at the third which the farmer tried to insist on his eating, saying: "Come, put that into your stomach; 'twill fatten you or it is your own fault, eh, pig!"

The soldier, understanding only that they wanted to make him eat all his soup, laughed in a contented manner, making a sign to show that he could not hold any more.

Then Saint Anthony, become quite familiar, tapped him on the stomach, saying: "My, there is plenty in my pig's belly!" But suddenly he began to writhe with laughter, unable to speak. An idea had struck him which made him choke with mirth. "That's it, that's it, Saint Anthony and his pig. There's my pig!" And the three servants burst out laughing in their turn.

The old fellow was so pleased that he had the brandy brought in, good stuff, fil en dix, and treated every one. They clinked glasses with the Prussian, who clacked his tongue by way of flattery to show that he enjoyed it. And Saint Anthony exclaimed in his face: "Eh, is not that superfine? You don't get anything like that in your home, pig!"

From that time Father Anthony never went out without his Prussian. He had got what he wanted. This was his vengeance, the vengeance of an old rogue. And the whole countryside, which was in

terror, laughed to split its sides at Saint Anthony's joke. Truly, there was no one like him when it came to humor. No one but he would have thought of a thing like that. He was a born joker!

He went to see his neighbors every day, arm in arm with his German, whom he introduced in a jovial manner, tapping him on the shoulder: "See, here is my pig; look and see if he is not growing fat, the animal!"

And the peasants would beam with smiles. "He is so comical, that reckless fellow, Antoine!"

"I will sell him to you, Cesaire, for three pistoles" (thirty francs).

"I will take him, Antoine, and I invite you to eat some black pudding."

"What I want is his feet."

"Feel his belly; you will see that it is all fat."

And they all winked at each other, but dared not laugh too loud, for fear the Prussian might finally suspect they were laughing at him. Anthony, alone growing bolder every day, pinched his thighs, exclaiming, "Nothing but fat"; tapped him on the back, shouting, "That is all bacon"; lifted him up in his arms as an old Colossus that could have lifted an anvil, declaring, "He weighs six hundred and no waste."

He had got into the habit of making people offer his "pig" something to eat wherever they went together. This was the chief pleasure, the great diversion every day. "Give him whatever you please, he will swallow everything." And they offered the man bread and butter, potatoes, cold meat, chitterlings, which caused the remark, "Some of your own, and choice ones."

The soldier, stupid and gentle, ate from politeness, charmed at these attentions, making himself ill rather than refuse, and he was actually growing fat and his uniform becoming tight for him. This delighted Saint Anthony, who said: "You know, my pig, that we shall have to have another cage made for you."

They had, however, become the best friends in the world, and when the old fellow went to attend to his business in the neighborhood the Prussian accompanied him for the simple pleasure of being with him.

The weather was severe; it was freezing hard. The terrible winter of 1870 seemed to bring all the scourges on France at one time.

Father Antoine, who made provision beforehand, and took advantage of every opportunity, foreseeing that manure would be scarce for the spring farming, bought from a neighbor who happened to be in need of money all that he had, and it was agreed that he should go every evening with his cart to get a load.

So every day at twilight he set out for the farm of Haules, half a league distant, always accompanied by his "pig." And each time it was a festival, feeding the animal. All the neighbors ran over there as they would go to high mass on Sunday.

But the soldier began to suspect something, be mistrustful, and when they laughed too loud he would roll his eyes uneasily, and sometimes they lighted up with anger.

One evening when he had eaten his fill he refused to swallow another morsel, and attempted to rise to leave the table. But Saint Anthony stopped him-

by a turn of the wrist and, placing his two powerful hands on his shoulders, he sat him down again so roughly that the chair smashed under him.

A wild burst of laughter broke forth, and Anthony, beaming, picked up his pig, acted as though he were dressing his wounds, and exclaimed: "Since you will not eat, you shall drink, nom de Dieu!" And they went to the wine shop to get some brandy.

The soldier rolled his eyes, which had a wicked expression, but he drank, nevertheless; he drank as long as they wanted him, and Saint Anthony held his head to the great delight of his companions.

The Norman, red as a tomato, his eyes ablaze, filled up the glasses and clinked, saying: "Here's to you!" And the Prussian, without speaking a word, poured down one after another glassfuls of cognac.

It was a contest, a battle, a revenge! Who would drink the most, nom d'un nom! They could neither of them stand any more when the liter was emptied. But neither was conquered. They were tied, that was all. They would have to begin again the next day.

They went out staggering and started for home, walking beside the dung cart which was drawn along slowly by two horses.

Snow began to fall and the moonless night was sadly lighted by this dead whiteness on the plain. The men began to feel the cold, and this aggravated their intoxication. Saint Anthony, annoyed at not being the victor, amused himself by shoving his companion so as to make him fall over into the ditch. The other would dodge backwards, and each time he did he uttered some German expression

in an agry tone, which made the peasant roar with laughter. Finally the Prussian lost his temper, and just as Anthony was rolling towards him he responded with such a terrific blow with his fist that the Colossus staggered.

Then, excited by the brandy, the old man seized the pugilist round the waist, shook him for a few moments as he would have done with a little child, and pitched him at random to the other side of the road. Then, satisfied with this piece of work, he crossed his arms and began to laugh afresh.

But the soldier picked himself up in a hurry, his head bare, his helmet having rolled off, and drawing his sword he rushed over to Father Anthony.

When he saw him coming the peasant seized his whip by the top of the handle, his big holly wood whip, straight, strong and supple as the sinew of an ox.

The Prussian approached, his head down, making a lunge with his sword, sure of killing his adversary. But the old fellow, squarely hitting the blade, the point of which would have pierced his stomach, turned it aside, and with the butt end of the whip struck the soldier a sharp blow on the temple and he fell to the ground.

Then he gazed aghast, stupefied with amazement, at the body, twitching convulsively at first and then lying prone and motionless. He bent over it, turned it on its back, and gazed at it for some time. The man's eyes were closed, and blood trickled from a wound at the side of his forehead. Although it was dark, Father Anthony could distinguish the bloodstain on the white snow.

He remained there, at his wit's end, while his cart continued slowly on its way.

What was he to do? He would be shot! They would burn his farm, ruin his district! What should he do? What should he do? How could he hide the body, conceal the fact of his death, deceive the Prussians? He heard voices in the distance, amid the utter stillness of the snow. All at once he roused himself, and picking up the helmet he placed it on his victim's head. Then, seizing him round the body, he lifted him up in his arms, and thus running with him, he overtook his team, and threw the body on top of the manure. Once in his own house he would think up some plan.

He walked slowly, racking his brain, but without result. He saw, he felt, that he was lost. He entered his courtyard. A light was shining in one of the attic windows; his maid was not asleep. He hastily backed his wagon to the edge of the manure hollow. He thought that by overturning the manure the body lying on top of it would fall into the ditch and be buried beneath it, and he dumped the cart.

As he had foreseen, the man was buried beneath the manure. Anthony evened it down with his fork, which he stuck in the ground beside it. He called his stableman, told him to put up the horses, and went to his room.

He went to bed, still thinking of what he had best do, but no ideas came to him. His apprehension increased in the quiet of his room. They would shoot him! He was bathed in perspiration from fear, his teeth chattered, he rose shivering, not being able to stay in bed.

He went downstairs to the kitchen, took the bot-

tle of brandy from the sideboard and carried it upstairs. He drank two large glasses, one after another, adding a fresh intoxication to the late one, without quieting his mental anguish. He had done a pretty stroke of work, nom de Dieu, idiot!

He paced up and down, trying to think of some stratagem, some explanations, some cunning trick, and from time to time he rinsed his mouth with a swallow of "fil en dix" to give him courage.

But no ideas came to him, not one.

Towards midnight his watch dog, a kind of cross wolf called "Devorant," began to howl frantically. Father Anthony shuddered to the marrow of his bones, and each time the beast began his long and lugubrious wail the old man's skin turned to goose flesh.

He had sunk into a chair, his legs weak, stupefied, done up, waiting anxiously for "Devorant" to set up another howl, and starting convulsively from nervousness caused by terror.

The clock downstairs struck five. The dog was still howling. The peasant was almost insane. He rose to go and let the dog loose, so that he should not hear him. He went downstairs, opened the hall door, and stepped out into the darkness. The snow was still falling. The earth was all white, the farm buildings standing out like black patches. He approached the kennel. The dog was dragging at his chain. He unfastened it. "Devorant" gave a bound, then stopped short, his hair bristling, his legs rigid, his muzzle in the air, his nose pointed towards the manure heap.

Saint Anthony, trembling from head to foot, faltered:

"What's the matter with you, you dirty hound?" and he walked a few steps forward, gazing at the indistinct outlines, the sombre shadow of the court-yard.

Then he saw a form, the form of a man sitting on the manure heap!

He gazed at it, paralyzed by fear, and breathing hard. But all at once he saw, close by, the handle of the manure fork which was sticking in the ground. He snatched it up and in one of those transports of fear that will make the greatest coward brave he rushed forward to see what it was.

It was he, his Prussian, come to life, covered with filth from his bed of manure which had kept him warm. He had sat down mechanically, and remained there in the snow which sprinkled down, all covered with dirt and blood as he was, and still stupid from drinking, dazed by the blow and exhausted from his wound.

He perceived Anthony, and too sodden to understand anything, he made an attempt to rise. But the moment the old man recognized him, he foamed with rage like a wild animal.

"Ah, pig! pig!" he sputtered. "You are not dead! You are going to denounce me now—wait—wait!"

And rushing on the German with all the strength of his arms he flung the raised fork like a lance and buried the four prongs full length in his breast.

The soldier fell over on his back, uttering a long death moan, while the old peasant, drawing the fork out of his breast, plunged it over and over again into his abdomen, his stomach, his throat, like a madman, piercing the body from head to foot, as it still quivered, and the blood gushed out in streams.

Finally he stopped, exhausted by his arduous work, swallowing great mouthfuls of air, calmed down at the completion of the murder.

As the cocks were beginning to crow in the poultry yard and it was near daybreak, he set to work to bury the man.

He dug a hole in the manure till he reached the earth, dug down further, working wildly, in a frenzy of strength with frantic motions of his arms and body.

When the pit was deep enough he rolled the corpse into it with the fork, covered it with earth, which he stamped down for some time, and then put back the manure, and he smiled as he saw the thick snow finishing his work and covering up its traces with a white sheet.

He then stuck the fork in the manure and went into the house. His bottle, still half full of brandy stood on the table. He emptied it at a draught, threw himself on his bed and slept heavily.

He woke up sober, his mind calm and clear, capable of judgment and thought.

At the end of an hour he was going about the country making inquiries everywhere for his soldier. He went to see the Prussian officer to find out why they had taken away his man.

As everyone knew what good friends they were, no one suspected him. He even directed the research, declaring that the Prussian went to see the girls every evening.

An old retired gendarme who had an inn in the next village, and a pretty daughter, was arrested and shot.

LASTING LOVE

IT was the end of the dinner that opened the shooting season. The Marquis de Bertrans with his guests sat around a brightly lighted table, covered with fruit and flowers. The conversation drifted to love. Immediately there arose an animated discussion, the same eternal discussion as to whether it were possible to love more than once. Examples were given of persons who had loved once; these were offset by those who had loved violently many times. The men agreed that passion, like sickness, may attack the same person several times, unless it strikes to kill. This conclusion seemed quite incontestable. The women, however, who based their opinion on poetry rather than on practical observation, maintained that love, the great passion, may come only once to mortals. It resembles lightning, they said, this love. A heart once touched by it becomes forever such a waste, so ruined, so consumed, that no other strong sentiment can take root there, not even a dream.

The marquis, who had indulged in many love affairs, disputed this belief.

"I tell you it is possible to love several times with all one's heart and soul. You quote examples of persons who have killed themselves for love, to prove the impossibility of a second passion. I wager that if they had not foolishly committed suicide,

and so destroyed the possibility of a second experience, they would have found a new love, and still another, and so on till death. It is with love as with drink. He who has once indulged is forever a slave. It is a thing of temperament."

They chose the old doctor as umpire. He thought it was as the marquis had said, a thing of temperament.

"As for me," he said, "I once knew of a love which lasted fifty-five years without one day's respite, and which ended only with death." The wife of the marquis clasped her hands.

"That is beautiful! Ah, what a dream to be loved in such a way! What bliss to live for fifty-five years enveloped in an intense, unwavering affection! How this happy being must have blessed his life to be so adored!"

The doctor smiled.

"You are not mistaken, madame, on this point—the loved one was a man. You even know him; it is Monsieur Chouquet, the chemist. As to the woman, you also know her, the old chair-mender, who came every year to the château." The enthusiasm of the women fell. Some expressed their contempt with "Pouah!" for the loves of common people did not interest them. The doctor continued: "Three months ago I was called to the deathbed of the old chair-mender. The priest had preceded me. She wished to make us the executors of her will. In order that we might understand her conduct, she told us the story of her life. It is most singular and touching. Her father and mother were both chair-menders. She had never lived in a house. As a little child she wandered about with

them, dirty, unkempt, hungry. They visited many towns, leaving their horse, wagon and dog just outside the limits, where the child played in the grass alone until her parents had repaired all the broken chairs in the place. They seldom spoke, except to cry, 'Chairs! Chairs! Chair-mender!'

"When the little one strayed too far away, she would be called back by the harsh, angry voice of her father. She never heard a word of affection. When she grew older, she fetched and carried the broken chairs. Then it was she made friends with the children in the street, but their parents always called them away and scolded them for speaking to the barefooted child. Often the boys threw stones at her. Once a kind woman gave her a few pennies. She saved them most carefully.

"One day—she was then eleven years old—as she was walking through a country town she met, behind the cemetery, little Chouquet, weeping bitterly, because one of his playmates had stolen two precious liards (mills). The tears of the small bourgeois, one of those much-envied mortals, who, she imagined, never knew trouble, completely upset her. She approached him and, as soon as she learned the cause of his grief, she put into his hands all her savings. He took them without hesitation and dried his eyes. Wild with joy, she kissed him. He was busy counting his money, and did not object. Seeing that she was not repulsed, she threw her arms round him and gave him a hug—then she ran away.

"What was going on in her poor little head? Was it because she had sacrificed all her fortune that she became madly fond of this youngster, or

was it because she had given him the first tender kiss? The mystery is alike for children and for those of riper years. For months she dreamed of that corner near the cemetery and of the little chap. She stole a sou here and there from her parents on the chair money or groceries she was sent to buy. When she returned to the spot near the cemetery she had two francs in her pocket, but he was not there. Passing his father's drug store, she caught sight of him behind the counter. He was sitting between a large red globe and a blue one. She only loved him the more, quite carried away at the sight of the brilliant-colored globes. She cherished the recollection of it forever in her heart. The following year she met him near the school, playing marbles. She rushed up to him, threw her arms round him, and kissed him so passionately that he screamed, in fear. To quiet him, she gave him all her money. Three francs and twenty centimes! A real gold mine, at which he gazed with staring eyes.

"After this he allowed her to kiss him as much as she wished. During the next four years she put into his hands all her savings, which he pocketed conscientiously in exchange for kisses. At one time it was thirty sous, at another two francs. Again, she only had twelve sous. She wept with grief and shame, explaining brokenly that it had been a poor year. The next time she brought five francs, in one whole piece, which made her laugh with joy. She no longer thought of any one but the boy, and he watched for her with impatience; sometimes he would run to meet her. This made her heart thump with joy. Suddenly he disappeared. He had gone

to boarding school. She found this out by careful investigation. Then she used great diplomacy to persuade her parents to change their route and pass by this way again during vacation. After a year of scheming she succeeded. She had not seen him for two years, and scarcely recognized him, he was so changed, had grown taller, better looking and was imposing in his uniform, with its brass buttons. He pretended not to see her, and passed by without a glance. She wept for two days and from that time loved and suffered unceasingly.

"Every year he came home and she passed him, not daring to lift her eyes. He never condescended to turn his head toward her. She loved him madly, hopelessly. She said to me:

" 'He is the only man whom I have ever seen. I don't even know if another exists.' Her parents died. She continued their work.

"One day, on entering the village, where her heart always remained, she saw Chouquet coming out of his pharmacy with a young lady leaning on his arm. She was his wife. That night the chair-mender threw herself into the river. A drunkard passing the spot pulled her out and took her to the drug store. Young Chouquet came down in his dressing gown to revive her. Without seeming to know who she was he undressed her and rubbed her; then he said to her, in a harsh voice:

" 'You are mad! People must not do stupid things like that.' His voice brought her to life again. He had spoken to her! She was happy for a long time. He refused remuneration for his trouble, although she insisted.

"All her life passed in this way. She worked,

thinking always of him. She began to buy medicines at his pharmacy; this gave her a chance to talk to him and to see him closely. In this way, she was still able to give him money.

"As I said before, she died this spring. When she had closed her pathetic story she entreated me to take her earnings to the man she loved. She had worked only that she might leave him something to remind him of her after her death. I gave the priest fifty francs for her funeral expenses. The next morning I went to see the Chouquets. They were finishing breakfast, sitting opposite each other, fat and red, important and self-satisfied. They welcomed me and offered me some coffe, which I accepted. Then I began my story in a trembling voice, sure that they would be softened, even to tears. As soon as Chouquet understood that he had been loved by 'that vagabond! that chair-mender! that wanderer!' he swore with indignation as though his reputation had been sullied, the respect of decent people lost, his personal honor, something precious and dearer to him than life, gone. His exasperated wife kept repeating: 'That beggar! That beggar!'

"Seeming unable to find words suitable to the enormity, he stood up and began striding about. He muttered: 'Can you understand anything so horrible, doctor? Oh, if I had only known it while she was alive, I should have had her thrown into prison. I promise you she would not have escaped.'

"I was dumfounded; I hardly knew what to think or say, but I had to finish my mission. 'She commissioned me,' I said, 'to give you her savings, which amount to three thousand five hundred francs. As what I have just told you seems to be very disagree-

able, perhaps you would prefer to give this money to the poor.'

"They looked at me, that man and woman, speechless with amazement. I took the few thousand francs from out of my pocket. Wretched-looking money from every country. Pennies and gold pieces all mixed together. Then I asked:

"'What is your decision?'

"Madame Chouquet spoke first. 'Well, since it is the dying woman's wish, it seems to me impossible to refuse it.'

"Her husband said, in a shamefaced manner: 'We could buy something for our children with it.'

"I answered dryly: 'As you wish.'

"He replied: 'Well, give it to us anyhow, since she commissioned you to do so; we will find a way to put it to some good purpose.'

"I gave them the money, bowed and left.

"The next day Chouquet came to me and said brusquely:

"'That woman left her wagon here—what have you done with it?'

"'Nothing; take it if you wish.'

"'It's just what I wanted,' he added, and walked off. I called him back and said:

"'She also left her old horse and two dogs. Don't you need them?'

"He stared at me surprised: 'Well, no! Really, what would I do with them?'

"'Dispose of them as you like.'

"He laughed and held out his hand to me. I shook it. What could I do? The doctor and the druggist in a country village must not be at enmity. I have kept the dogs. The priest took the

old horse. The wagon is useful to Chouquet, and with the money he has bought railroad stock. That is the only deep, sincere love that I have ever known in all my life."

The doctor looked up. The marquise, whose eyes were full of tears, sighed and said:

"There is no denying the fact, only women know how to love."

PIERROT

MME. LEFÈVRE was a country dame, a widow, one of these half peasants, with ribbons and bonnets with trimming on them, one of those persons who clipped her words and put on great airs in public, concealing the soul of a pretentious animal beneath a comical and bedizened exterior, just as the country-folks hide their coarse red hands in écru silk gloves.

She had a servant, a good simple peasant, called Rose.

The two women lived in a little house with green shutters by the side of the high road in Normandy, in the centre of the country of Caux. As they had a narrow strip of garden in front of the house, they grew some vegetables.

One night someone stole twelve onions. As soon as Rose became aware of the theft, she ran to tell madame, who came downstairs in her woolen petticoat. It was a shame and a disgrace! They had robbed her, Mme. Lefèvre! As there were thieves in the country, they might come back.

And the two frightened women examined the foot tracks, talking, and supposing all sorts of things.

"See, they went that way! They stepped on the wall, they jumped into the garden!"

And they became apprehensive for the future. How could they sleep in peace now!

The news of the theft spread. The neighbors

came, making examinations and discussing the matter in their turn, while the two women explained to each newcomer what they had observed and their opinion.

A farmer who lived near said to them:

"You ought to have a dog."

That is true, they ought to have a dog, if it were only to give the alarm. Not a big dog. Heavens! what would they do with a big dog? He would eat their heads off. But a little dog (in Normandy they say "quin"), a little puppy who would bark.

As soon as everyone had left, Mme. Lefèvre discussed this idea of a dog for some time. On reflection she made a thousand objections, terrified at the idea of a bowl full of soup, for she belonged to that race of parsimonious country women who always carry centimes in their pocket to give alms in public to beggars on the road and to put in the Sunday collection plate.

Rose, who loved animals, gave her opinion and defended it shrewdly. So it was decided that they should have a dog, a very small dog.

They began to look for one, but could find nothing but big dogs, who would devour enough soup to make one shudder. The grocer of Rolleville had one, a tiny one, but he demanded two francs to cover the cost of sending it. Mme. Lefèvre declared that she would feed a "quin," but would not buy one.

The baker, who knew all that occurred, brought in his wagon one morning a strange little yellow animal, almost without paws, with the body of a crocodile, the head of a fox, and a curly tail—a true cockade, as big as all the rest of him. Mme. Lefèvre thought this common cur that cost nothing was very

handsome. Rose hugged it and asked what its name was.

"Pierrot," replied the baker.

The dog was installed in an old soap box and they gave it some water which it drank. They then offered it a piece of bread. He ate it. Mme. Lefèvre, uneasy, had an idea.

"When he is thoroughly accustomed to the house we can let him run. He can find something to eat, roaming about the country."

They let him run, in fact, which did not prevent him from being famished. Also he never barked except to beg for food, and then he barked furiously.

Anyone might come into the garden, and Pierrot would run up and fawn on each one in turn and not utter a bark.

Mme. Lefèvre, however, had become accustomed to the animal. She even went so far as to like it and to give it from time to time pieces of bread soaked in the gravy on her plate.

But she had not once thought of the dog tax, and when they came to collect eight france—eight francs, madame—for this puppy who never even barked, she almost fainted from the shock.

It was immediately decided that they must get rid of Pierrot. No one wanted him. Every one declined to take him for ten leagues around. Then they resolved, not knowing what else to do, to make him "piquer du mas."

"Piquer du mas" means to eat chalk. When one wants to get rid of a dog they make him "Piquer du mas."

In the midst of an immense plain one sees a kind of hut, or rather a very small roof standing above

the ground. This is the entrance to the clay pit. A big perpendicular hole is sunk for twenty metres underground and ends in a series of long subterranean tunnels.

Once a year they go down into the quarry at the time they fertilize the ground. The rest of the year it serves as a cemetery for condemned dogs, and as one passed by this hole plaintive howls, furious or despairing barks and lamentable appeals reach one's ear.

Sportsmen's dogs and sheep dogs flee in terror from this mournful place, and when one leans over it one perceives a disgusting odor of putrefaction.

Frightful dramas are enacted in the darkness.

When an animal has suffered down there for ten or twelve days, nourished on the foul remains of his predecessors, another animal, larger and more vigorous, is thrown into the hole. There they are, alone, starving, with glittering eyes. They watch each other, follow each other, hesitate in doubt. But hunger impels them; they attack each other, fight desperately for some time, and the stronger eats the weaker, devours him alive.

When it was decided to make Pierrot "piquer du mas" they looked round for an executioner. The laborer who mended the road demanded six sous to take the dog there. That seemed wildly exorbitant to Mme. Lefèvre. The neighbor's hired boy wanted five sous; that was still too much. So Rose having observed that they had better carry it there themselves, as in that way it would not be brutally treated on the way and made to suspect its fate, they resolved to go together at twilight.

They offered the dog that evening a good dish of

soup with a piece of butter in it. He swallowed every morsel of it, and as he wagged his tail with delight Rose put him in her apron.

They walked quickly, like thieves, across the plain. They soon perceived the chalk pit and walked up to it. Mme. Lefèvre leaned over to hear if any animal was moaning. No, there were none there; Pierrot would be alone. Then Rose, who was crying, kissed the dog and threw him into the chalk pit, and they both leaned over, listening.

First they heard a dull sound, then the sharp, bitter, distracting cry of an animal in pain, then a succession of little mournful cries, then despairing appeals, the cries of a dog who is entreating, his head raised toward the opening of the pit.

He yelped, oh, how he yelped!

They were filled with remorse, with terror, with a wild, inexplicable fear, and ran away from the spot. As Rose went faster Mme. Lefèvre cried: "Wait for me, Rose, wait for me!"

At night they were haunted by frightful nightmares.

Mme. Lefèvre dreamed she was sitting down at table to eat her soup, but when she uncovered the tureen Pierrot was in it. He jumped out and bit her nose.

She awoke and thought she heard him yelping still. She listened, but she was mistaken.

She fell asleep again and found herself on a high road, an endless road, which she followed. Suddenly in the middle of the road she perceived a basket, a large farmer's basket, lying there, and this basket frightened her.

She ended by opening it, and Pierrot, concealed in

it, seized her hand and would not let go. She ran away in terror with the dog hanging to the end of her arm, which he held between his teeth.

At daybreak she arose, almost beside herself, and ran to the chalk pit.

He was yelping, yelping still; he had yelped all night. She began to sob and called him by all sorts of endearing names. He answered her with all the tender inflections of his dog's voice.

Then she wanted to see him again, promising herself that she would give him a good home till he died.

She ran to the chalk digger, whose business it was to excavate for chalk, and told him the situation. The man listened, but said nothing. When she had finished he said:

"You want your dog? That will cost four francs." She gave a jump. All her grief was at an end at once.

"Four francs!" she said. "You would die of it! Four francs!"

"Do you suppose I am going to bring my ropes, my windlass, and set it up, and go down there with my boy and let myself be bitten, perhaps, by your cursed dog for the pleasure of giving it back to you? You should not have thrown it down there."

She walked away, indignant. Four francs!

As soon as she entered the house she called Rose and told her of the quarryman's charges. Rose, always resigned, repeated:

"Four francs! That is a good deal of money, madame." Then she added: "If we could throw him something to eat, the poor dog, so he will not die of hunger."

Mme. Lefèvre approved of this and was quite de-

lighted. So they set out again with a big piece of bread and butter.

They cut it in mouthfuls, which they threw down one after the other, speaking by turns to Pierrot. As soon as the dog finished one piece he yelped for the next.

They returned that evening and the next day and every day. But they made only one trip.

One morning as they were just letting fall the first mouthful they suddenly heard a tremendous barking in the pit. There were two dogs there. Another had been thrown in, a large dog.

"Pierrot!" cried Rose. And Pierrot yelped and yelped. Then they began to throw down some food. But each time they noticed distinctly a terrible struggle going on, then plaintive cries from Pierrot, who had been bitten by his companion, who ate up everything as he was the stronger.

It was in vain that they specified, saying:

"That is for you, Pierrot." Pierrot evidently got nothing.

The two women, dumfounded, looked at each other and Mme. Lefèvre said in a sour tone:

"I could not feed all the dogs they throw in there! We must give it up."

And, suffocating at the thought of all the dogs living at her expense, she went away, even carrying back what remained of the bread, which she ate as she walked along.

Rose followed her, wiping her eyes on the corner of her blue apron.

A NORMANDY JOKE

IT was a wedding procession that was coming along the road between the tall trees that bounded the farms and cast their shadow on the road. At the head were the bride and groom, then the family, then the invited guests, and last of all the poor of the neighborhood. The village urchins who hovered about the narrow road like flies ran in and out of the ranks or climbed up the trees to see it better.

The bridegroom was a good-looking young fellow, Jean Patu, the richest farmer in the neighborhood, but he was, above all things, an ardent sportsman who seemed to take leave of his senses in order to satisfy that passion, and who spent large sums on his dogs, his keepers, his ferrets and his guns. The bride, Rosalie Roussel, had been courted by all the likely young fellows in the district, for they all thought her handsome and they knew that she would have a good dowry. But she had chosen Patu; partly, perhaps, because she liked him better than she did the others, but still more, like a careful Normandy girl, because he had more crown pieces.

As they entered the white gateway of the husband's farm, forty shots resounded without their seeing those who fired, as they were hidden in the ditches. The noise seemed to please the men, who were slouching along heavily in their best clothes,

"As they entered the white gateway of the husband's farm, forty shots resounded."

—A Normandy Joke, p. 1.

and Patu left his wife, and running up to a farm servant whom he perceived behind a tree, took his gun and fired a shot himself, as frisky as a young colt. Then they went on, beneath the apple trees which were heavy with fruit, through the high grass and through the midst of the calves, who looked at them with their great eyes, got up slowly and remained standing, with their muzzles turned toward the wedding party.

The men became serious when they came within measurable distance of the wedding dinner. Some of them, the rich ones, had on tall, shining silk hats, which seemed altogether out of place there; others had old head-coverings with a long nap, which might have been taken for moleskin, while the humblest among them wore caps. All the women had on shawls, which they wore loosely on their back, holding the tips ceremoniously under their arms. They were red, parti-colored, flaming shawls, and their brightness seemed to astonish the black fowls on the dung-heap, the ducks on the side of the pond and the pigeons on the thatched roofs.

The extensive farm buildings seemed to be waiting there at the end of that archway of apple trees, and a sort of vapor came out of open door and windows and an almost overpowering odor of eatables was exhaled from the vast building, from all its openings and from its very walls. The string of guests extended through the yard; but when the foremost of them reached the house, they broke the chain and dispersed, while those behind were still coming in at the open gate. The ditches were now lined with urchins and curious poor people, and the firing did not cease, but came from every side at

once, and a cloud of smoke, and that odor which has the same intoxicating effect as absinthe, blended with the atmosphere.

The women were shaking their dresses outside the door, to get rid of the dust, were undoing their cap-strings and pulling their shawls over their arms, and then they went into the house to lay them aside altogether for the time. The table was laid in the great kitchen that would hold a hundred persons; they sat down to dinner at two o'clock, and at eight o'clock they were still eating, and the men, in their shirt-sleeves, with their waistcoats unbuttoned and with red faces, were swallowing down the food and drink as if they had been whirlpools. The cider sparkled merrily, clear and golden in the large glasses, by the side of the dark, blood-colored wine, and between every dish they made a "hole," the Normandy hole, with a glass of brandy which inflamed the body and put foolish notions into the head. Low jokes were exchanged across the table until the whole arsenal of peasant wit was exhausted. For the last hundred years the same broad stories had served for similar occasions, and, although every one knew them, they still hit the mark and made both rows of guests roar with laughter.

At one end of the table four young fellows, who were neighbors, were preparing some practical jokes for the newly married couple, and they seemed to have got hold of a good one by the way they whispered and laughed, and suddenly one of them, profiting by a moment of silence, exclaimed: "The poachers will have a good time to-night, with this moon! I say, Jean, you will not be looking at the moon, will you?" The bridegroom turned to him

quickly and replied: "Only let them come, that's all!" But the other young fellow began to laugh, and said: "I do not think you will pay much attention to them!"

The whole table was convulsed with laughter, so that the glasses shook, but the bridegroom became furious at the thought that anybody would profit by his wedding to come and poach on his land, and repeated: "I only say—just let them come!"

Then there was a flood of talk with a double meaning which made the bride blush somewhat, although she was trembling with expectation; and when they had emptied the kegs of brandy they all went to bed. The young couple went into their own room, which was on the ground floor, as most rooms in farmhouses are. As it was very warm, they opened the window and closed the shutters. A small lamp in bad taste, a present from the bride's father, was burning on the chest of drawers, and the bed stood ready to receive the young people.

The young woman had already taken off her wreath and her dress, and she was in her petticoat, unlacing her boots, while Jean was finishing his cigar and looking at her out of the corners of his eyes. Suddenly, with a brusque movement, like a man who is about to set to work, he took off his coat. She had already taken off her boots, and was now pulling off her stockings, and then she said to him: "Go and hide yourself behind the curtains while I get into bed."

He seemed as if he were about to refuse; but at last he did as she asked him, and in a moment she unfastened her petticoat, which slipped down, fell at her feet and lay on the ground. She left it

there, stepped over it in her loose chemise and slipped into the bed, whose springs creaked beneath her weight. He immediately went up to the bed, and, stooping over his wife, he sought her lips, which she hid beneath the pillow, when a shot was heard in the distance, in the direction of the forest of Râpées, as he thought.

He raised himself anxiously, with his heart beating, and running to the window, he opened the shutters. The full moon flooded the yard with yellow light, and the reflection of the apple trees made black shadows at their feet, while in the distance the fields gleamed, covered with the ripe corn. But as he was leaning out, listening to every sound in the still night, two bare arms were put round his neck, and his wife whispered, trying to pull him back: "Do leave them alone; it has nothing to do with you. Come to bed."

He turned round, put his arms round her, and drew her toward him, but just as he was laying her on the bed, which yielded beneath her weight, they heard another report, considerably nearer this time, and Jean, giving way to his tumultuous rage, swore aloud: "Damn it! They will think I do not go out and see what it is because of you! Wait, wait a few minutes!" He put on his shoes again, took down his gun, which was always hanging within reach against the wall, and, as his wife threw herself on her knees in her terror, imploring him not to go, he hastily freed himself, ran to the window and jumped into the yard.

She waited one hour, two hours, until daybreak, but her husband did not return. Then she lost her head, aroused the house, related how angry Jean

was, and said that he had gone after the poachers, and immediately all the male farm-servants, even the boys, went in search of their master. They found him two leagues from the farm, tied hand and foot, half dead with rage, his gun broken, his trousers turned inside out, and with three dead hares hanging round his neck, and a placard on his chest with these words: "Who goes on the chase loses his place."

In later years, when he used to tell this story of his wedding night, he usually added: "Ah! as far as a joke went it was a good joke. They caught me in a snare, as if I had been a rabbit, the dirty brutes, and they shoved my head into a bag. But if I can only catch them some day they had better look out for themselves!"

That is how they amuse themselves in Normandy on a wedding day.

FATHER MATTHEW

WE had just left Rouen and were galloping along the road to Jumièges. The light carriage flew along across the level country. Presently the horse slackened his pace to walk up the hill of Cantelen.

One sees there one of the most magnificent views in the world. Behind us lay Rouen, the city of churches, with its Gothic belfries, sculptured like ivory trinkets; before us Saint Sever, the manufacturing suburb, whose thousands of smoking chimneys rise amid the expanse of sky, opposite the thousand sacred steeples of the old city.

On the one hand the spire of the cathedral, the highest of human monuments, on the other the engine of the power-house, its rival, and almost as high, and a metre higher than the tallest pyramid in Egypt.

Before us wound the Seine, with its scattered islands and bordered by white banks, covered with a forest on the right and on the left immense meadows, bounded by another forest yonder in the distance.

Here and there large ships lay at anchor along the banks of the wide river. Three enormous steamboats were starting out, one behind the other, for Havre, and a chain of boats, a bark, two schooners

and a brig, were going upstream to Rouen, drawn by a little tug that emitted a cloud of black smoke.

My companion, a native of the country, did not glance at this wonderful landscape, but he smiled continually; he seemed to be amused at his thoughts. Suddenly he cried:

"Ah, you will seen see something comical—Father Matthew's chapel. That is a sweet morsel, my boy."

I looked at him in surprise. He continued:

"I will give you a whiff of Normandy that will stay by you. Father Matthew is the handsomest Norman in the province and his chapel is one of the wonders of the world, nothing more nor less. But I will first give you a few words of explanation.

"Father Matthew, who is also called Father 'La Boisson,' is an old sergeant-major who has come back to his native land. He combines in admirable proportions, making a perfect whole, the humbug of the old soldier and the sly roguery of the Norman. On his return to Normandy, thanks to influence and incredible cleverness, he was made doorkeeper of a votive chapel, a chapel dedicated to the Virgin and frequented chiefly by young women who have gone astray. . . . He composed and had painted a special prayer to his 'Good Virgin.' This prayer is a masterpiece of unintentional irony, of Norman wit, in which jest is blended with fear of the saint and with the superstitious fear of the secret influence of something. He has not much faith in his protectress, but he believes in her a little through prudence, and he is considerate of her through policy.

"This is how this wonderful prayer begins:

" 'Our good Madame Virgin Mary, natural protectress of girl mothers in this land and all over the

world, protect your servant who erred in a moment of forgetfulness . . .'

"It ends thus:

" 'Do not forget me, especially when you are with your holy spouse, and intercede with God the Father that he may grant me a good husband, like your own.'

"This prayer, which was suppressed by the clergy of the district, is sold by him privately, and is said to be very efficacious for those who recite it with unction.

"In fact he talks of the good Virgin as the valet de chambre of a redoubted prince might talk of his master who confided in him all his little private secrets. He knows a number of amusing anecdotes at his expense which he tells confidentially among friends as they sit over their glasses.

"But you will see for yourself.

"As the fees coming from the Virgin did not appear sufficient to him, he added to the main figure a little business in saints. He has them all, or nearly all. There was not room enough in the chapel, so he stored them in the wood-shed and brings them forth as soon as the faithful ask for them. He carved these little wooden statues himself—they are comical in the extreme—and painted them all bright green one year when they were painting his house. You know that saints cure diseases, but each saint has his specialty, and you must not confound them or make any blunders. They are as jealous of each other as mountebanks.

"In order that they may make no mistake, the old women come and consult Matthew.

" 'For diseases of the ear which saint is the best?'

" 'Why, Saint Osyme is good and Saint Pamphilius is not bad.' But that is not all.

"As Matthew has some time to spare, he drinks; but he drinks like a professional, with conviction, so much so that he is intoxicated regularly every evening. He is drunk, but he is aware of it. He is so well aware of it that he notices each day his exact degree of intoxication. That is his chief occupation; the chapel is a secondary matter.

"And he has invented—listen and catch on—he has invented the 'Saoulomètre.'

"There is no such instrument, but Matthew's observations are as precise as those of a mathematician. You may hear him repeating incessantly: 'Since Monday I have had more than forty-five,' or else 'I was between fifty-two and fifty-eight,' or else 'I had at least sixty-six to seventy,' or 'Hullo, cheat, I thought I was in the fifties and here I find I had had seventy-five!'

"He never makes a mistake.

"He declares that he never reached his limit, but as he acknowledges that his observations cease to be exact when he has passed ninety, one cannot depend absolutely on the truth of that statement.

"When Matthew acknowledges that he has passed ninety, you may rest assured that he is blind drunk.

"On these occasions his wife, Mélie, another marvel, flies into a fury. She waits for him at the door of the house, and as he enters she roars at him:

" 'So there you are, slut, hog, giggling sot!'

"Then Matthew, who is not laughing any longer, plants himself opposite her and says in a severe tone:

" 'Be still, Mélie; this is no time to talk; wait till to-morrow.'

"If she keeps on shouting at him, he goes up to her and says in a shaky voice:

" 'Don't bawl any more. I have had about ninety; I am not counting any more. Look out, I am going to hit you!'

"Then Mélie beats a retreat.

"If, on the following day, she reverts to the subject, he laughs in her face and says:

" 'Come, come! We have said enough. It is past. As long as I have not reached my limit there is no harm done. But if I go past that I will allow you to correct me, my word on it!' "

We had reached the top of the hill. The road entered the delightful forest of Roumare.

Autumn, marvellous autumn, blended its gold and purple with the remaining traces of verdure. We passed through Duclair. Then, instead of going on to Jumièges, my friend turned to the left and, taking a crosscut, drove in among the trees.

And presently from the top of a high hill we saw again the magnificent valley of the Seine and the winding river beneath us.

At our right a very small slate-covered building, with a bell tower as large as a sunshade, adjoined a pretty house with green Venetian blinds, and all covered with honeysuckle and roses.

"Here are some friends!" cried a big voice, and Matthew appeared on the threshold. He was a man about sixty, thin and with a goatee and long, white mustache.

My friend shook him by the hand and introduced

me, and Matthew took us into a clean kitchen, which served also as a dining-room. He said:

"I have no elegant apartment, monsieur. I do not like to get too far away from the food. The saucepans, you see, keep me company." Then, turning to my friend:

"Why did you come on Thursday? You know quite well that this is the day I consult my Guardian Saint. I cannot go out this afternoon."

And running to the door, he uttered a terrific roar: "Mélie!" which must have startled the sailors in the ships along the stream in the valley below.

Mélie did not reply.

Then Matthew winked his eye knowingly.

"She is not pleased with me, you see, because yesterday I was in the nineties."

My friend began to laugh. "In the nineties, Matthew! How did you manage it?"

"I will tell you," said Matthew. "Last year I found only twenty rasières (an old dry measure) of apricots. There are no more, but those are the only things to make cider of. So I made some, and yesterday I tapped the barrel. Talk of nectar! That was nectar. You shall tell me what you think of it. Polyte was here, and we sat down and drank a glass and another without being satisfied (one could go on drinking it until to-morrow), and at last, with glass after glass, I felt a chill at my stomach. I said to Polyte: 'Supposing we drink a glass of cognac to warm ourselves?' He agreed. But this cognac, it sets you on fire, so that we had to go back to the cider. But by going from chills to heat and heat to chills, I saw that I was in the nineties. Polyte was not far from his limit."

The door opened and Mélie appeared. At once, before bidding us good-day, she cried:

"Great hog, you have both of you reached your limit!"

"Don't say that, Mélie; don't say that," said Matthew, getting angry. "I have never reached my limit."

They gave us a delicious luncheon outside beneath two lime trees, beside the little chapel and overlooking the vast landscape. And Matthew told us, with a mixture of humor and unexpected credulity, incredible stories of miracles.

We had drunk a good deal of delicious cider, sparkling and sweet, fresh and intoxicating, which he preferred to all other drinks, and were smoking our pipes astride our chairs when two women appeared.

They were old, dried up and bent. After greeting us they asked for Saint Blanc. Matthew winked at us as he replied:

"I will get him for you." And he disappeared in his wood shed. He remained there fully five minutes. Then he came back with an expression of consternation. He raised his hands.

"I don't know where he is. I cannot find him. I am quite sure that I had him." Then making a speaking trumpet of his hands, he roared once more: "Méli-e-e!"

"What's the matter?" replied his wife from the end of the garden.

"Where's Saint Blanc? I cannot find him in the wood shed."

Then Mélie explained it this way:

"Was not that the one you took last week to stop up a hole in the rabbit hutch?"

Matthew gave a start.

"By thunder, that may be!" Then turning to the women, he said:

"Follow me."

They followed him. We did the same, almost choking with suppressed laughter.

Saint Blanc was indeed stuck into the earth like an ordinary stake, covered with mud and dirt, and forming a corner for the rabbit hutch.

As soon as they perceived him the two women fell on their knees, crossed themselves and began to murmur an "Oremus." But Matthew darted toward them.

"Wait," he said, "you are in the mud; I will get you a bundle of straw."

He went to fetch the straw and made them a priedieu. Then, looking at his muddy saint and doubtless afraid of bringing discredit on his business, he added:

"I will clean him off a little for you."

He took a pail of water and a brush and began to scrub the wooden image vigorously, while the two old women kept on praying.

When he had finished he said:

"Now he is all right." And he took us back to the house to drink another glass.

As he was carrying the glass to his lips he stopped and said in a rather confused manner:

"All the same, when I put Saint Blanc out with the rabbits I thought he would not make any more money. For two years no one had asked for him. But the saints, you see, they are never out of date."

THE WRECK

IT was yesterday, the 31st of December.

I had just finished breakfast with my old friend Georges Garin when the servant handed him a letter covered with seals and foreign stamps.

Georges said:

"Will you excuse me?"

"Certainly."

And so he began to read the letter, which was written in a large English handwriting, crossed and recrossed in every direction. He read them slowly, with serious attention and the interest which we only pay to things which touch our hearts.

Then he put the letter on the mantelpiece and said:

"That was a curious story! I've never told you about it, I think. Yet it was a sentimental adventure, and it really happened to me. That was a strange New Year's Day, indeed! It must have been twenty years ago, for I was then thirty and am now fifty years old.

"I was then an inspector in the Maritime Insurance Company, of which I am now director. I had arranged to pass New Year's Day in Paris—since it is customary to make that day a *fête*—when I received a letter from the manager, asking me to proceed at once to the island of Ré, where a three-masted vessel from Saint-Nazaire, insured by us,

had just been driven ashore. It was then eight o'clock in the morning. I arrived at the office at ten to get my advices, and that evening I took the express, which put me down in La Rochelle the next day, the 31st of December.

"I had two hours to wait before going aboard the boat for Ré. So I made a tour of the town. It is certainly a queer city, La Rochelle, with strong characteristics of its own—streets tangled like a labyrinth, sidewalks running under endless arcaded galleries like those of the Rue de Rivoli, but low, mysterious, built as if to form a suitable setting for conspirators and making a striking background for those old-time wars, the savage heroic wars of religion. It is indeed the typical old Huguenot city, conservative, discreet, with no fine art to show, with no wonderful monuments, such as make Rouen; but it is remarkable for its severe, somewhat sullen look; it is a city of obstinate fighters, a city where fanaticism might well blossom, where the faith of the Calvinists became enthusiastic and which gave birth to the plot of the 'Four Sergeants.'

"After I had wandered for some time about these curious streets, I went aboard the black, rotund little steamboat which was to take me to the island of Ré. It was called the *Jean Guiton.* It started with angry puffings, passed between the two old towers which guard the harbor, crossed the roadstead and issued from the mole built by Richelieu, the great stones of which can be seen at the water's edge, enclosing the town like a great necklace. Then the steamboat turned to the right.

"It was one of those sad days which give one the blues, tighten the heart and take away all strength

and energy and force—a gray, cold day, with a heavy mist which was as wet as rain, as cold as frost, as bad to breathe as the steam of a wash-tub.

"Under this low sky of dismal fog the shallow, yellow, sandy sea of all practically level beaches lay without a wrinkle, without a movement, without life, a sea of turbid water, of greasy water, of stagnant water. The *Jean Guiton* passed over it, rolling a little from habit, dividing the smooth, dark blue water and leaving behind a few waves, a little splashing, a slight swell, which soon calmed down.

"I began to talk to the captain, a little man with small feet, as round as his boat and rolling in the same manner. I wanted some details of the disaster on which I was to draw up a report. A great square-rigged three-master, the *Marie Joseph,* of Saint-Nazaire, had gone ashore one night in a hurricane on the sands of the island of Ré.

"The owner wrote us that the storm had thrown the ship so far ashore that it was impossible to float her and that they had to remove everything which could be detached with the utmost possible haste. Nevertheless I must examine the situation of the wreck, estimate what must have been her condition before the disaster and decide whether all efforts had been used to get her afloat. I came as an agent of the company in order to give contradictory testimony, if necessary, at the trial.

"On receipt of my report, the manager would take what measures he might think necessary to protect our interests.

"The captain of the *Jean Guiton* knew all about the affair, having been summoned with his boat to assist in the attempts at salvage.

"He told me the story of the disaster. The *Marie Joseph* driven by a furious gale lost her bearings completely, in the night, and steering by chance over a heavy foaming sea—'a milk-soup sea,' said the captain—had gone ashore on those immense sand beaches which make the coasts of this country look like limitless Saharas when the tide is low.

"While talking I looked around and ahead. Between the ocean and the lowering sky lay an open space where the eye could see into the distance. We were following a coast. I asked:

"'Is that the island of Ré?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"And suddenly the captain stretched his right hand out before us, pointed to something almost imperceptible in the open sea, and said:

"'There's your ship!'

"'The *Marie Joseph?*'

"'Yes.'

"I was amazed. This black, almost imperceptible speck, which looked to me like a rock, seemed at least three miles from land.

"I continued:

"'But, captain, there must be a hundred fathoms of water in that place.'

"He began to laugh.

"'A hundred fathoms, my child! Well, I should say about two!'

"He was from Bordeaux. He continued:

"'It's now nine-forty, just high tide. Go down along the beach with your hands in your pockets after you've had lunch at the Hôtel du Dauphin, and I'll wager that at ten minutes to three, or three o'clock, you'll reach the wreck without wetting your

feet, and have from an hour and three-quarters to two hours aboard of her; but not more, or you'll be caught. The faster the sea goes out the faster it comes back. This coast is as flat as a turtle! But start away at ten minutes to five, as I tell you, and at half-past seven you will be again aboard of the *Jean Guiton,* which will put you down this same evening on the quay at La Rochelle.'

"I thanked the captain and I went and sat down in the bow of the steamer to get a good look at the little city of Saint-Martin, which we were now rapidly approaching.

"It was just like all small seaports which serve as capitals of the barren islands scattered along the coast—a large fishing village, one foot on sea and one on shore, subsisting on fish and wild fowl, vegetables and shell-fish, radishes and mussels. The island is very low and little cultivated, yet it seems to be thickly populated. However, I did not penetrate into the interior.

"After breakfast I climbed across a little promontory, and then, as the tide was rapidly falling, I started out across the sands toward a kind of black rock which I could just perceive above the surface of the water, out a considerable distance.

"I walked quickly over the yellow plain. It was elastic, like flesh, and seemed to sweat beneath my tread. The sea had been there very lately. Now I perceived it at a distance, escaping out of sight, and I no longer could distinguish the line which separated the sands from ocean. I felt as though I were looking at a gigantic supernatural work of enchantment. The Atlantic had just now been before me, then it had disappeared into the sands, just as

scenery disappears through a trap; and I was now walking in the midst of a desert. Only the feeling, the breath of the salt-water, remained in me. I perceived the smell of the wrack, the smell of the sea, the good strong smell of sea coasts. I walked fast; I was no longer cold. I looked at the stranded wreck, which grew in size as I approached, and came now to resemble an enormous shipwrecked whale.

"It seemed fairly to rise out of the ground, and on that great, flat, yellow stretch of sand assumed wonderful proportions. After an hour's walk I at last reached it. It lay upon its side, ruined and shattered, its broken bones showing as though it were an animal, its bones of tarred wood pierced with great bolts. The sand had already invaded it, entering it by all the crannies, and held it and refused to let it go. It seemed to have taken root in it. The bow had entered deep into this soft, treacherous beach, while the stern, high in air, seemed to cast at heaven, like a cry of despairing appeal, the two white words on the black planking, *Marie Joseph.*

"I climbed upon this carcass of a ship by the lowest side; then, having reached the deck, I went below. The daylight, which entered by the stove-in hatches and the cracks in the sides, showed me dimly long dark cavities full of demolished woodwork. They contained nothing but sand, which served as foot-soil in this cavern of planks.

"I began to take some notes about the condition of the ship. I was seated on a broken empty cask, writing by the light of a great crack, through which I could perceive the boundless stretch of the strand. A strange shivering of cold and loneliness ran over my skin from time to time, and I would often stop

writing for a moment to listen to the mysterious noises in the derelict: the noise of crabs scratching the planking with their crooked claws; the noise of a thousand little creatures of the sea already crawling over this dead body or else boring into the wood.

"Suddenly, very near me, I heard human voices. I started as though I had seen a ghost. For a second I really thought I was about to see drowned men rise from the sinister depths of the hold, who would tell me about their death. At any rate, it did not take me long to swing myself on deck. There, standing by the bows, was a tall Englishman with three young misses. Certainly they were a good deal more frightened at seeing this sudden apparition on the abandoned three-master than I was at seeing them. The youngest girl turned and ran, the two others threw their arms round their father. As for him, he opened his mouth—that was the only sign of emotion which he showed.

"Then, after several seconds, he spoke:

"'Môsieu, are you the owner of this ship?'

"'I am.'

"'May I go over it?'

"'You may.'

"Then he uttered a long sentence in English, in which I only distinguished the word 'gracious,' repeated several times.

"As he was looking for a place to climb up, I showed him the easiest way, and gave him a hand. He climbed up. Then we helped up the three girls, who had now quite recovered their composure. They were charming, especially the oldest, a blonde of eighteen, fresh as a flower, and very dainty and pretty! Ah, yes! the pretty Englishwomen have in-

deed the look of tender sea fruit. One would have said of this one that she had just risen out of the sands and that her hair had kept their tint. They all, with their exquisite freshness, make you think of the delicate colors of pink sea-shells and of shining pearls hidden in the unknown depths of the ocean.

"She spoke French a little better than her father and acted as interpreter. I had to tell all about the shipwreck, and I romanced as though I had been present at the catastrophe. Then the whole family descended into the interior of the wreck. As soon as they had penetrated into this sombre, dimly lit cavity they uttered cries of astonishment and admiration. Suddenly the father and his three daughters were holding sketch-books in their hands, which they had doubtless carried hidden somewhere in their heavy weather-proof clothes, and were all beginning at once to make pencil sketches of this melancholy and weird place.

"They had seated themselves side by side on a projecting beam, and the four sketch-books on the eight knees were being rapidly covered with little black lines which were intended to represent the half-opened hulk of the *Marie Joseph*.

"I continued to inspect the skeleton of the ship, and the oldest girl talked to me while she worked.

"They had none of the usual English arrogance; they were simple honest hearts of that class of continuous travellers with which England covers the globe. The father was long and thin, with a red face framed in white whiskers, and looking like a living sandwich, a piece of ham carved like a face between two wads of hair. The daughters, who had

long legs like young storks, were also thin—except the oldest. All three were pretty, especially the tallest.

"She had such a droll way of speaking, of laughing, of understanding and of not understanding, of raising her eyes to ask a question (eyes blue as the deep ocean), of stopping her drawing a moment to make a guess at what you meant, of returning once more to work, of saying 'yes' or 'no'—that I could have listened and looked indefinitely.

"Suddenly she murmured:

"'I hear a little sound on this boat.'

"I listened and I immediately distinguished a low, steady, curious sound. I rose and looked out of the crack and gave a scream. The sea had come up to us; it would soon surround us!

"We were on deck in an instant. It was too late. The water circled us about and was running toward the coast at tremendous speed. No, it did not run, it glided, crept, spread like an immense, limitless blot. The water was barely a few centimeters deep, but the rising flood had gone so far that we no longer saw the vanishing line of the imperceptible tide.

"The Englishman wanted to jump. I held him back. Flight was impossible because of the deep places which we had been obliged to go round on our way out and into which we should fall on our return.

"There was a minute of horrible anguish in our hearts. Then the little English girl began to smile and murmured:

"'It is we who are shipwrecked.'

"I tried to laugh, but fear held me, a fear which

was cowardly and horrid and base and treacherous like the tide. All the danger which we ran appeared to me at once. I wanted to shriek: 'Help!' But to whom?

"The two younger girls were clinging to their father, who looked in consternation at the measureless sea which hedged us round about.

"The night fell as swiftly as the ocean rose—a lowering, wet, icy night.

"I said:

" 'There's nothing to do but to stay on the ship.'

"The Englishman answered:

" 'Oh, yes!'

"And we waited there a quarter of an hour, half an hour, indeed I don't know how long, watching that creeping water growing deeper as it swirled around us, as though it were playing on the beach, which it had regained.

"One of the young girls was cold, and we went below to shelter ourselves from the light but freezing wind that made our skins tingle.

"I leaned over the hatchway. The ship was full of water. So we had to cower against the stern planking, which shielded us a little.

"Darkness was now coming on, and we remained huddled together. I felt the shoulder of the little English girl trembling against mine, her teeth chattering from time to time. But I also felt the gentle warmth of her body through her ulster, and that warmth was as delicious to me as a kiss. We no longer spoke; we sat motionless, mute, cowering down like animals in a ditch when a hurricane is raging. And, nevertheless, despite the night, despite the terrible and increasing danger, I began to feel

happy that I was there, glad of the cold and the peril, glad of the long hours of darkness and anguish that I must pass on this plank so near this dainty, pretty little girl.

"I asked myself, 'Why this strange sensation of well-being and of joy?'

"Why! Does one know? Because she was there? Who? She, a little unknown English girl? I did not love her, I did not even know her. And for all that, I was touched and conquered. I wanted to save her, to sacrifice myself for her, to commit a thousand follies! Strange thing! How does it happen that the presence of a woman overwhelms us so? Is it the power of her grace which infolds us? Is it the seduction of her beauty and youth, which intoxicates one like wine?

"Is it not rather the touch of Love, of Love the Mysterious, who seeks constantly to unite two beings, who tries his strength the instant he has put a man and a woman face to face?

"The silence of the darkness became terrible, the stillness of the sky dreadful, because we could hear vaguely about us a slight, continuous sound, the sound of the rising tide and the monotonous plashing of the water against the ship.

"Suddenly I heard the sound of sobs. The youngest of the girls was crying. Her father tried to console her, and they began to talk in their own tongue, which I did not understand. I guessed that he was reassuring her and that she was still afraid.

"I asked my neighbor:

" 'You are not too cold, are you, mademoiselle?'

" 'Oh, yes. I am very cold.'

"I offered to give her my cloak; she refused it.

But I had taken it off and I covered her with it against her will. In the short struggle her hand touched mine. It made a delicious thrill run through my body.

"For some minutes the air had been growing brisker, the dashing of the water stronger against the flanks of the ship. I raised myself; a great gust of wind blew in my face. The wind was rising!

"The Englishman perceived this at the same time that I did and said simply:

" 'This is bad for us, this——'

"Of course it was bad, it was certain death if any breakers, however feeble, should attack and shake the wreck, which was already so shattered and disconnected that the first big sea would carry it off.

"So our anguish increased momentarily as the squalls grew stronger and stronger. Now the sea broke a little, and I saw in the darkness white lines appearing and disappearing, lines of foam, while each wave struck the *Marie Joseph* and shook her with a short quiver which went to our hearts.

"The English girl was trembling. I felt her shiver against me. And I had a wild desire to take her in my arms.

"Down there, before and behind us, to the left and right, lighthouses were shining along the shore—lighthouses white, yellow and red, revolving like the enormous eyes of giants who were watching us, waiting eagerly for us to disappear. One of them in especial irritated me. It went out every thirty seconds and it lit up again immediately. It was indeed an eye, that one, with its lid incessantly lowered over its fiery glance.

"From time to time the Englishman struck a

match to see the hour; then he put his watch back in his pocket. Suddenly he said to me, over the heads of his daughters, with tremendous gravity:

"'I wish you a happy New Year, Môsieu.'

"It was midnight. I held out my hand, which he pressed. Then he said something in English, and suddenly he and his daughters began to sing 'God Save the Queen,' which rose through the black and silent air and vanished into space.

"At first I felt a desire to laugh; then I was seized by a powerful, strange emotion.

"It was something sinister and superb, this chant of the shipwrecked, the condemned, something like a prayer and also like something grander, something comparable to the ancient *'Ave Cæsar morituri te salutant.'*

"When they had finished I asked my neighbor to sing a ballad alone, anything she liked, to make us forget our terrors. She consented, and immediately her clear young voice rang out into the night. She sang something which was doubtless sad, because the notes were long drawn out and hovered, like wounded birds, above the waves.

"The sea was rising now and beating upon our wreck. As for me, I thought only of that voice. And I thought also of the sirens. If a ship had passed near by us what would the sailors have said? My troubled spirit lost itself in the dream! A siren! Was she not really a siren, this daughter of the sea, who had kept me on this worm-eaten ship and who was soon about to go down with me deep into the waters?

"But suddenly we were all five rolling on the deck, because the *Marie Joseph* had sunk on her

right side. The English girl had fallen upon me, and before I knew what I was doing, thinking that my last moment was come, I had caught her in my arms and kissed her cheek, her temple and her hair.

"The ship did not move again, and we, we also, remained motionless.

"The father said, 'Kate!' The one whom I was holding answered 'Yes' and made a movement to free herself. And at that moment I should have wished the ship to split in two and let me fall with her into the sea.

"The Englishman continued:

"'A little rocking; it's nothing. I have my three daughters safe.'

"Not having seen the oldest, he had thought she was lost overboard!

"I rose slowly, and suddenly I made out a light on the sea quite close to us. I shouted; they answered. It was a boat sent out in search of us by the hotelkeeper, who had guessed at our imprudence.

"We were saved. I was in despair. They picked us up off our raft and they brought us back to Saint-Martin.

"The Englishman began to rub his hand and murmur:

"'A good supper! A good supper!'

"We did sup. I was not gay. I regretted the *Marie Joseph.*

"We had to separate the next day after much handshaking and many promises to write. They departed for Biarritz. I wanted to follow them.

"I was hard hit. I wanted to ask this little girl to marry me. If we had passed eight days together,

I should have done so! How weak and incomprehensible a man sometimes is!

"Two years passed without my hearing a word from them. Then I received a letter from New York. She was married and wrote to tell me. And since then we write to each other every year, on New Year's Day. She tells me about her life, talks of her children, her sisters, never of her husband! Why? Ah! why? And as for me, I only talk of the *Marie Joseph*. That was perhaps the only woman I have ever loved—no—that I ever should have loved. Ah, well! who can tell? Circumstances rule one. And then—and then—all passes. She must be old now; I should not know her. Ah! she of the bygone time, she of the wreck! What a creature! Divine! She writes me her hair is white. That caused me terrible pain. Ah! her yellow hair. No, *my* English girl exists no longer. How sad it all is!"

THEODULE SABOT'S CONFESSION

WHEN Sabot entered the inn at Martinville it was a signal for laughter. What a rogue he was, this Sabot! There was a man who did not like priests, for instance! Oh, no, oh, no! He did not spare them, the scamp.

Sabot (Théodule), a master carpenter, represented liberal thought in Martinville. He was a tall, thin, man, with gray, cunning eyes, and thin lips, and wore his hair plastered down on his temples. When he said: "Our holy father, the pope" in a certain manner, everyone laughed. He made a point of working on Sunday during the hour of mass. He killed his pig each year on Monday in Holy Week in order to have enough black pudding to last till Easter, and when the priest passed by, he always said by way of a joke: "There goes one who has just swallowed his God off a salver."

The priest, a stout man and also very tall, dreaded him on account of his boastful talk which attracted followers. The Abbé Maritime was a politic man, and believed in being diplomatic. There had been a rivalry between them for ten years, a secret, intense, incessant rivalry. Sabot was municipal councillor, and they thought he would become

mayor, which would inevitably mean the final overthrow of the church.

The elections were about to take place. The church party was shaking in its shoes in Martinville.

One morning the curé set out for Rouen, telling his servant that he was going to see the archbishop. He returned in two days with a joyous, triumphant air. And everyone knew the following day that the chancel of the church was going to be renovated. A sum of six hundred francs had been contributed by the archbishop out of his private fund. All the old pine pews were to be removed, and replaced by new pews made of oak. It would be a big carpentering job, and they talked about it that very evening in all the houses in the village.

Théodule Sabot was not laughing.

When he went through the village the following morning, the neighbors, friends and enemies, all asked him, jokingly:

"Are you going to do the work on the chancel of the church?"

He could find nothing to say, but he was furious, he was good and angry.

Ill-natured people added:

"It is a good piece of work; and will bring in not less than two or three per cent. profit."

Two days later, they heard that the work of renovation had been entrusted to Celestin Chambrelan, the carpenter from Percheville. Then this was denied, and it was said that all the pews in the church were going to be changed. That would be well worth the two thousand francs that had been demanded of the church administration.

Théodule Sabot could not sleep for thinking

about it. Never, in all the memory of man, had a country carpenter undertaken a similar piece of work. Then a rumor spread abroad that the curé felt very grieved that he had to give this work to a carpenter who was a stranger in the community, but that Sabot's opinions were a barrier to his being entrusted with the job.

Sabot knew it well. He called at the parsonage just as it was growing dark. The servant told him that the curé was at church. He went to the church.

Two attendants on the altar of the Virgin, two sour old maids, were decorating the altar for the month of Mary, under the direction of the priest, who stood in the middle of the chancel with his portly paunch, directing the two women who, mounted on chairs, were placing flowers around the tabernacle.

Sabot felt ill at ease in there, as though he were in the house of his greatest enemy, but the greed of gain was gnawing at his heart. He drew nearer, holding his cap in his hand, and not paying any attention to the "demoiselles de la Vierge," who remained standing startled, astonished, motionless on their chairs.

He faltered:

"Good morning, monsieur le curé."

The priest replied without looking at him, all occupied as he was with the altar:

"Good morning, Mr. Carpenter."

Sabot, nonplussed, knew not what to say next. But after a pause he remarked:

"You are making preparations?"

Abbé Maritime replied:

"Yes, we are near the month of Mary."

"Why, why," remarked Sabot and then was silent.

He would have liked to retire now without saying anything, but a glance at the chancel held him back. He saw sixteen seats that had to be remade, six to the right and eight to the left, the door of the sacristy occupying the place of two. Sixteen oak seats, that would be worth at most three hundred francs, and by figuring carefully one might certainly make two hundred francs on the work if one were not clumsy.

Then he stammered out:

"I have come about the work."

The curé appeared surprised. He asked:

"What work?"

"The work to be done," murmured Sabot, in dismay.

Then the priest turned round and looking him straight in the eyes, said:

"Do you mean the repairs in the chancel of my church?"

At the tone of the abbé, Théodule Sabot felt a chill run down his back and he once more had a longing to take to his heels. However, he replied humbly:

"Why, yes, monsieur le curé."

Then the abbé folded his arms across his large stomach and, as if filled with amazement, said:

"Is it you—you—you, Sabot—who have come to ask me for this . . . You—the only irreligious man in my parish! Why, it would be a scandal, a public scandal! The archbishop would give me a reprimand, perhaps transfer me."

He stopped a few seconds, for breath, and then resumed in a calmer tone: "I can understand that

it pains you to see a work of such importance entrusted to a carpenter from a neighboring parish. But I cannot do otherwise, unless—but no—it is impossible—you would not consent, and unless you did, never."

Sabot now looked at the row of benches in line as far as the entrance door. Christopher, if they were going to change all those!

And he asked:

"What would you require of me? Tell me."

The priest, in a firm tone replied:

"I must have an extraordinary token of your good intentions."

"I do not say—I do not say; perhaps we might come to an understanding," faltered Sabot.

"You will have to take communion publicly at high mass next Sunday," declared the curé.

The carpenter felt he was growing pale, and without replying, he asked:

"And the benches, are they going to be renovated?"

The abbé replied with confidence:

"Yes, but later on."

Sabot resumed:

"I do not say, I do not say. I am not calling it off, I am consenting to religion, for sure. But what rubs me the wrong way is, putting it in practice; but in this case I will not be refractory."

The attendants of the Virgin, having got off their chairs had concealed themselves behind the altar; and they listened pale with emotion.

The curé, seeing he had gained the victory, became all at once very friendly, quite familiar.

"That is good, that is good. That was wisely said,

and not stupid, you understand. You will see, you will see."

Sabot smiled and asked with an awkward air:

"Would it not be possible to put off this communion just a trifle?"

But the priest replied, resuming his severe expression:

"From the moment that the work is put into your hands, I want to be assured of your conversion."

Then he continued more gently:

"You will come to confession to-morrow; for I must examine you at least twice."

"Twice?" repeated Sabot.

"Yes."

The priest smiled.

"You understand perfectly that you must have a general cleaning up, a thorough cleansing. So I will expect you to-morrow."

The carpenter, much agitated, asked:

"Where do you do that?"

"Why—in the confessional."

"In—that box, over there in the corner? The fact is—is—that it does not suit me, your box."

"How is that?"

"Seeing that—seeing that I am not accustomed to that, and also I am rather hard of hearing."

The curé was very affable and said:

"Well, then! you shall come to my house and into my parlor. We will have it just the two of us, tête-à-tête. Does that suit you?"

"Yes, that is all right, that will suit me, but your box, no."

"Well, then, to-morrow after the day's work, at six o'clock."

"That is understood, that is all right, that is agreed on. To-morrow, monsieur le curé. Whoever draws back is a skunk!"

And he held out his great rough hand which the priest grasped heartily with a clap that resounded through the church.

Théodule Sabot was not easy in his mind all the following day. He had a feeling analogous to the apprehension one experiences when a tooth has to be drawn. The thought recurred to him at every moment: "I must go to confession this evening." And his troubled mind, the mind of an atheist only half convinced, was bewildered with a confused and overwhelming dread of the divine mystery.

As soon as he had finished his work, he betook himself to the parsonage. The curé was waiting for him in the garden, reading his breviary as he walked along a little path. He appeared radiant and greeted him with a good-natured laugh.

"Well, here we are! Come in, come in, Monsieur Sabot, no one will eat you."

And Sabot preceded him into the house. He faltered:

"If you do not mind I should like to get through with this little matter at once."

The curé replied:

"I am at your service. I have my surplice here. One minute and I will listen to you."

The carpenter, so disturbed that he had not two ideas in his head, watched him as he put on the white vestment with its pleated folds. The priest beckoned to him and said:

"Kneel down on this cushion."

Sabot remained standing, ashamed of having to kneel. He stuttered:

"Is it necessary?"

But the abbé had become dignified.

"You cannot approach the penitent bench except on your knees."

And Sabot knelt down.

"Repeat the *confiteor*," said the priest.

"What is that?" asked Sabot.

"The *confiteor*. If you do not remember it, repeat after me, one by one, the words I am going to say." And the curé repeated the sacred prayer, in a slow tone, emphasizing the words which the carpenter repeated after him. Then he said:

"Now make your confession."

But Sabot was silent, not knowing where to begin.

The abbé then came to his aid.

"My child, I will ask you questions, since you don't seem familiar with these things. We will take, one by one, the commandments of God. Listen to me and do not be disturbed. Speak very frankly and never fear that you may say too much.

"'One God, alone, thou shalt adore,
And love him perfectly.'

Have you ever loved anything, or anybody, as well as you loved God? Have you loved him with all your soul, all your heart, all the strength of your love?"

Sabot was perspiring with the effort of thinking. He replied:

"No. Oh, no, m'sieu le curé. I love God as much as I can. That is—yes—I love him very much. To say that I do not love my children, no—I cannot say that. To say that if I had to choose between

them and God, I could not be sure. To say that if I had to lose a hundred francs for the love of God, I could not say about that. But I love him well, for sure, I love him all the same."

The priest said gravely:

"You must love Him more than all besides."

And Sabot, meaning well, declared:

"I will do what I possibly can, m'sieu le curé."

The abbé resumed:

"'God's name in vain thou shalt not take
Nor swear by any other thing.'

Did you ever swear?"

"No—oh, that, no! I never swear, never. Sometimes, in a moment of anger, I may say sacré nom de Dieu! But then, I never swear."

"That is swearing," cried the priest, and added seriously:

"Do not do it again.

"'Thy Sundays thou shalt keep
In serving God devoutly.'

What do you do on Sunday?"

This time Sabot scratched his ear.

"Why, I serve God as best I can, m'sieu le curé. I serve him—at home. I work on Sunday."

The curé interrupted him, saying magnanimously:

"I know, you will do better in future. I will pass over the following commandments, certain that you have not transgressed the two first. We will take from the sixth to the ninth. I will resume:

"'Others' goods thou shalt not take
Nor keep what is not thine.'

Have you ever taken in any way what belonged to another?"

But Théodule Sabot became indignant.

"Of course not, of course not! I am an honest man, m'sieu le curé, I swear it, for sure. To say that I have not sometimes charged for a few more hours of work to customers who had means, I could not say that. To say that I never add a few centimes to bills, only a few, I would not say that. But to steal, no! Oh, not that, no!"

The priest resumed severely:

"To take one single centime constitutes a theft. Do not do it again.

" 'False witness thou shalt not bear,
Nor lie in any way.'

Have you ever told a lie?"

"No, as to that, no. I am not a liar. That is my quality. To say that I have never told a big story, I would not like to say that. To say that I have never made people believe things that were not true when it was to my own interest, I would not like to say that. But as for lying, I am not a liar."

The priest simply said:

"Watch yourself more closely." Then he continued:

"'The works of the flesh thou shalt not desire
Except in marriage only.'

Did you ever desire, or live with, any other woman than your wife?"

Sabot exclaimed with sincerity:

"As to that, no; oh, as to that, no, m'sieu le

curé. My poor wife, deceive her! No, no! Not so much as the tip of a finger, either in thought or in act. That is the truth."

They were silent a few seconds, then, in a lower tone, as though a doubt had arisen in his mind, he resumed:

"When I go to town, to say that I never go into a house, you know, one of the licensed houses, just to laugh and talk and see something different, I could not say that. But I always pay, monsieur le curé, I always pay. From the moment you pay, without anyone seeing or knowing you, no one can get you into trouble."

The curé did not insist, and gave him absolution.

Théodule Sabot did the work on the chancel, and goes to communion every month.

A PORTRAIT

"HELLO! there's Milial!" said somebody near me. I looked at the man who had been pointed out, as I had been wishing for a long time to meet this Don Juan.

He was no longer young. His gray hair looked a little like those fur bonnets worn by certain Northern peoples, and his long beard, which fell down over his chest, had also somewhat the appearance of fur. He was talking to a lady, leaning toward her, speaking in a low voice and looking at her with an expression full of respect and tenderness.

I knew his life, or at least as much as was known of it. He had loved madly several times, and there had been certain tragedies with which his name had been connected. When I spoke to women who were the loudest in his praise, and asked them whence came this power, they always answered, after thinking for a while: "I don't know—he has a certain charm about him."

He was certainly not handsome. He had none of the elegance that we ascribe to conquerors of feminine hearts. I wondered what might be his hidden charm. Was it mental? I never had heard of a clever saying of his. In his glance? Perhaps. Or in his voice? The voices of some beings have a certain irresistible attraction, almost suggesting the flavor of things good to eat. One is hungry for

them, and the sound of their words penetrates us like a dainty morsel. A friend was passing. I asked him: "Do you know Monsieur Milial?"

"Yes."

"Introduce us."

A minute later we were shaking hands and talking in the doorway. What he said was correct, agreeable to hear; it contained no irritable thought. The voice was sweet, soft, caressing, musical; but I had heard others much more attractive, much more moving. One listened to him with pleasure, just as one would look at a pretty little brook. No tension of the mind was necessary in order to follow him, no hidden meaning aroused curiosity, no expectation awoke interest. His conversation was rather restful, but it did not awaken in one either a desire to answer, to contradict or to approve, and it was as easy to answer him as it was to listen to him. The response came to the lips of its own accord, as soon as he had finished talking, and phrases turned toward him as if he had naturally aroused them.

One thought soon struck me. I had known him for a quarter of an hour, and it seemed as if he were already one of my old friends, that I had known all about him for a long time; his face, his gestures, his voice, his ideas. Suddenly, after a few minutes of conversation, he seemed already to be installed in my intimacy. All constraint disappeared between us, and, had he so desired, I might have confided in him as one confides only in old friends.

Certainly there was some mystery about him. Those barriers that are closed between most people and that are lowered with time when sympathy,

similar tastes, equal intellectual culture and constant intercourse remove constraint—those barriers seemed not to exist between him and me, and no doubt this was the case between him and all people, both men and women, whom fate threw in his path.

After half an hour we parted, promising to see each other often, and he gave me his address after inviting me to take luncheon with him in two days.

I forgot what hour he had stated, and I arrived too soon; he was not yet home. A correct and silent domestic showed me into a beautiful, quiet, softly lighted parlor. I felt comfortable there, at home. How often I have noticed the influence of apartments on the character and on the mind! There are some which make one feel foolish; in others, on the contrary, one always feels lively. Some make us sad, although well lighted and decorated in light-colored furniture; others cheer us up, although hung with sombre material. Our eye, like our heart, has its likes and dislikes, of which it does not inform us, and which it secretly imposes on our temperament. The harmony of furniture, walls, the style of an *ensemble,* act immediately on our mental state, just as the air from the woods, the sea or the mountains modifies our physical natures.

I sat down on a cushion-covered divan and felt myself suddenly carried and supported by these little silk bags of feathers, as if the outline of my body had been marked out beforehand on this couch.

Then I looked about. There was nothing striking about the room; everywhere were beautiful and modest things, simple and rare furniture, Oriental curtains which did not seem to come from a depart-

ment store but from the interior of a harem; and exactly opposite me hung the portrait of a woman. It was a portrait of medium size, showing the head and the upper part of the body, and the hands, which were holding a book. She was young, bareheaded; ribbons were woven in her hair; she was smiling sadly. Was it because she was bareheaded, was it merely her natural expression? I never have seen a portrait of a lady which seemed so much in its place as that one in that dwelling. Of all those I knew I have seen nothing like that one. All those that I know are on exhibition, whether the lady be dressed in her gaudiest gown, with an attractive headdress and a look which shows that she is posing first of all before the artist and then before those who will look at her or whether they have taken a comfortable attitude in an ordinary gown. Some are standing majestically in all their beauty, which is not at all natural to them in life. All of them have something, a flower or a jewel, a crease in the dress or a curve of the lip, which one feels to have been placed there for effect by the artist. Whether they wear a hat or merely their hair one can immediately notice that they are not entirely natural. Why? One cannot say without knowing them, but the effect is there. They seem to be calling somewhere, on people whom they wish to please and to whom they wish to appear at their best advantage; and they have studied their attitudes, sometimes modest, sometimes haughty.

What could one say about this one? She was at home and alone. Yes, she was alone, for she was smiling as one smiles when thinking in solitude of

something sad or sweet, and not as one smiles when one is being watched. She seemed so much alone and so much at home that she made the whole large apartment seem absolutely empty. She alone lived in it, filled it, gave it life. Many people might come in and converse, laugh, even sing; she would still be alone with a solitary smile, and she alone would give it life with her pictured gaze.

That look also was unique. It fell directly on me, fixed and caressing, without seeing me. All portraits know that they are being watched, and they answer with their eyes, which see, think, follow us without leaving us, from the very moment we enter the apartment they inhabit. This one did not see me; it saw nothing, although its look was fixed directly on me. I remembered the surprising verse of Baudelaire:

And your eyes, attractive as those of a portrait.

They did indeed attract me in an irresistible manner; those painted eyes which had lived, or which were perhaps still living, threw over me a strange, powerful spell. Oh, what an infinite and tender charm, like a passing breeze, like a dying sunset of lilac, rose and blue, a little sad like the approaching night, which comes behind the sombre frame and out of those impenetrable eyes! Those eyes, created by a few strokes from a brush, hide behind them the mystery of that which seems to be and which does not exist, which can appear in the eyes of a woman, which can make love blossom within us.

The door opened and M. Milial entered. He excused himself for being late. I excused myself for

being ahead of time. Then I said: "Might I ask you who is this lady?"

He answered: "That is my mother. She died very young."

Then I understood whence came the inexplicable attraction of this man.

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